

A Good Apple Language Arts/Reading Activity Book for Grades 4-6



Poetivities

INTERMEDIATE

INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES THAT TEACH CHILDREN
TO WRITE CREATIVE POETRY



by James Wainwright
illustrated by
Paul Manktelow

M. S. Brummer

POETIVITIES

**GUIDING CREATIVE POETIC EXPRESSION
SUCCESSFULLY IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES**

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

by James Wainwright

illustrated by Paul Manktelow

Cover by Jeff Van Kanegan

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The forgotten language . . .

hidden in neglected chambers
of the mind,

dormant under the layered dust
of “skill specific” thrust;

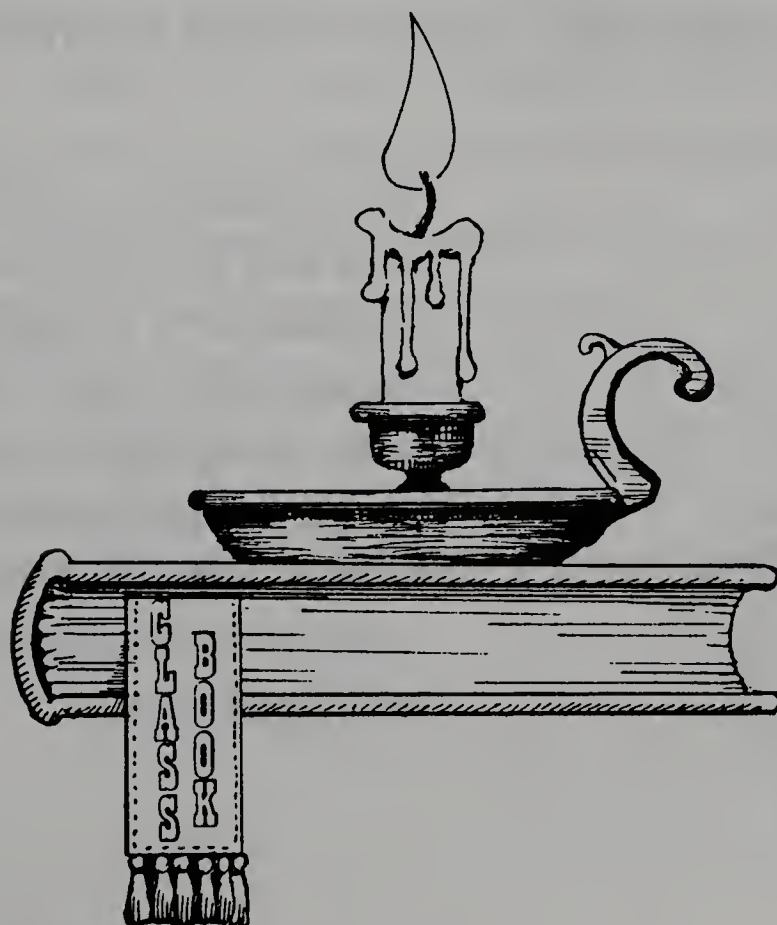
Powerless unless evoked.

Awaiting

Awakening

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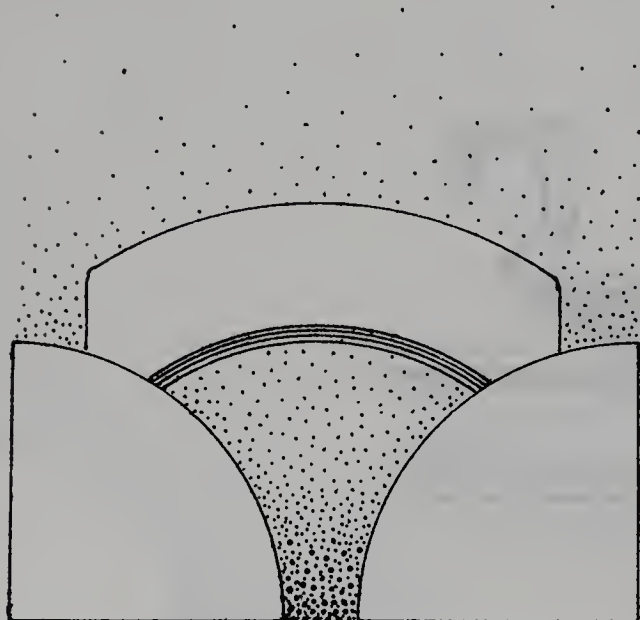


Introduction

Poetivities, a self-created word synthesized from poetry and activities, is an effort to stress the concept that poetry is a skill and, therefore, can be taught.

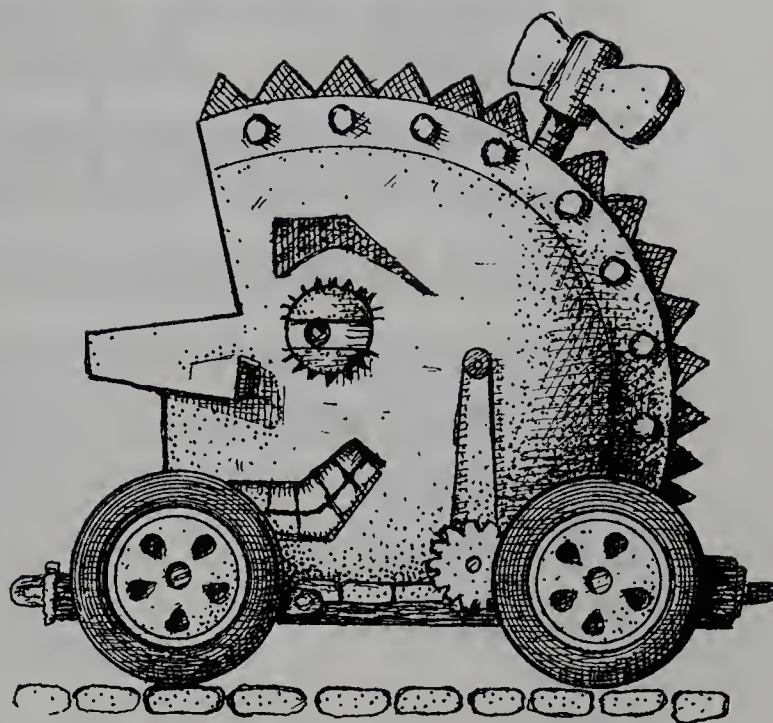
Each of us is born with much more than an innate desire to communicate our environmental situational experiences. We also seek an avenue for creative expression by which we can communally share the creative expression of our innermost thoughts, dreams, beliefs, feelings, and enigmas. We seek to move another's soul as well as register another's cognitive recognition. Poetry is one of the vehicles that allows us to fulfill this desire.

It is therefore an educational imperative that creative expression in young children be nurtured and developed. A true education must not only serve the logical practicalities of man's functioning within the framework of nature and society, but must also provide an awakening and involvement in the philosophical and metaphysical questions that have underlined mankind's existence from the very start. Poetry is the metaphorical language that bridges man's perceptions of reality with a greater reality beyond mere sensory data.



The plethora of self-help books and talk show topics often can be distilled into a single problematic realization—that mankind has lost the ability to creatively communicate its inner spirit, getting mired down in the restraints of coexisting in a cognition-based technological society.

This book is a guide to unlock the forgotten language of poetic free verse. It is comprised of multi-step lessons designed for the free thinking, free wheeling teacher who seeks to guide very young children into creative expression. It is a developed "idea book" and, like any good manual, should soon be filled with your own personal notes, as teaching, like learning, is not a single-path, static journey but rather an ever changing revisionary as well as visionary process.



I have merely provided a series of field-tested ideas. To utilize this handbook efficiently, you will want to instill your own individual essence into each developed exercise—noting what worked well, what could be expanded, what could be refined for you as an individual. As teachers, if we're not constantly involved in the struggle to reinvent the wheel, then we're destined to roll only so fast, only so smooth, and only on roads on which we feel safe.

The Poetivity lessons are also carefully designed to provide integration primarily in language arts, but also in cross-curriculum disciplines as well. The lessons, particularly the Prewrite Activities, will strengthen grammatical components skills far better than handfuls of English book pages and dittos in that they evoke application from within rather than mere recognition from without.

The lessons and the high degree of involvement that they generate will certainly stimulate vocabulary enrichment and will serve to strengthen reading skills, particularly in inferential comprehension. They will also coincide with many of the standard curriculum objectives covered in most science and social studies units typically taught at the elementary levels.

Finally, and probably most importantly, *Poetivities* will help break down the invisible barriers of poetry confusion and poetry resistance so common in children. It will subtly lead your students into both an awareness of poetry's flexible intents and an appreciation of poetry's art.



Poetry: Misunderstood Child of Communication

Preconceptions and misinformation have prevented the successful teaching of poetry writing for years. Poetry has mistakenly been looked upon as some kind of quasi-spiritual expression of elitist souls conceived by tormented minds and understood solely by literary intellectuals.

This is both tragic and completely wrong.

Poetry is actually our first venture into shared language expression. Toddlers speak in clipped syntax that is often symbolic of greater meaning than the mere word coupling. *Juice*, for example, actually stands for the unstated meaning of, "I'm thirsty and would like to drink some juice to rid myself of this thirst." This is the very heart of poetry—condensed linguistic lexicons that represent both hidden and multi-level semantical meaning.

The toddler is successful at it and never loses this ability with the infusion of sentence structure. Simply put, the elementary teacher needs only to strip this imposed structure and return to the language foundation in order to insure excellent poetic expression.

This manual will expand upon the simplistic premise stated above and offer devices, methods, and ideas to generate an exciting poetry writing experience for children of all ages.



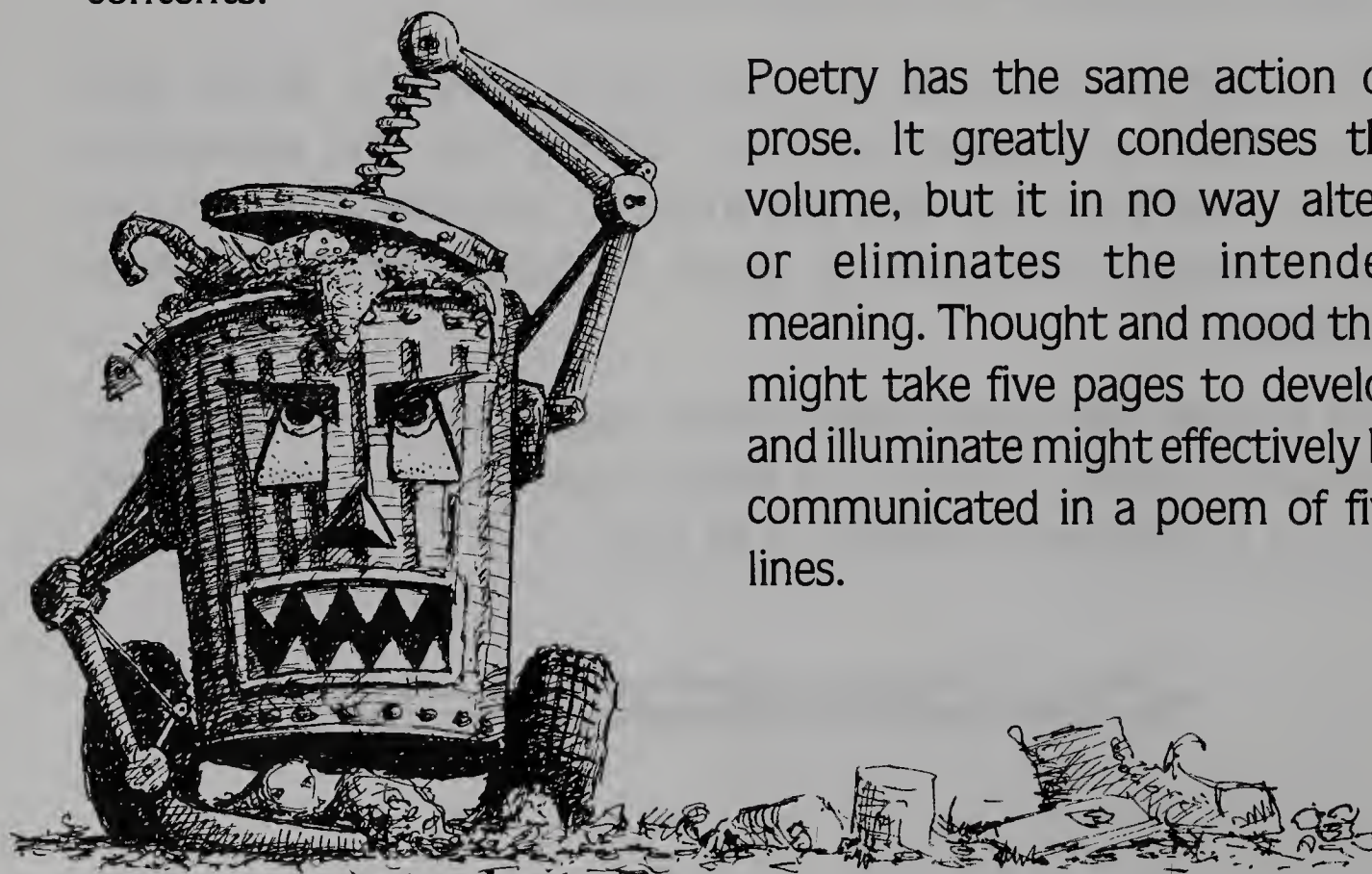
The Trash Compactor

Analogies often clarify foggy new information. In fact, we process all incoming knowledge dependent on the preexisting knowledge base.

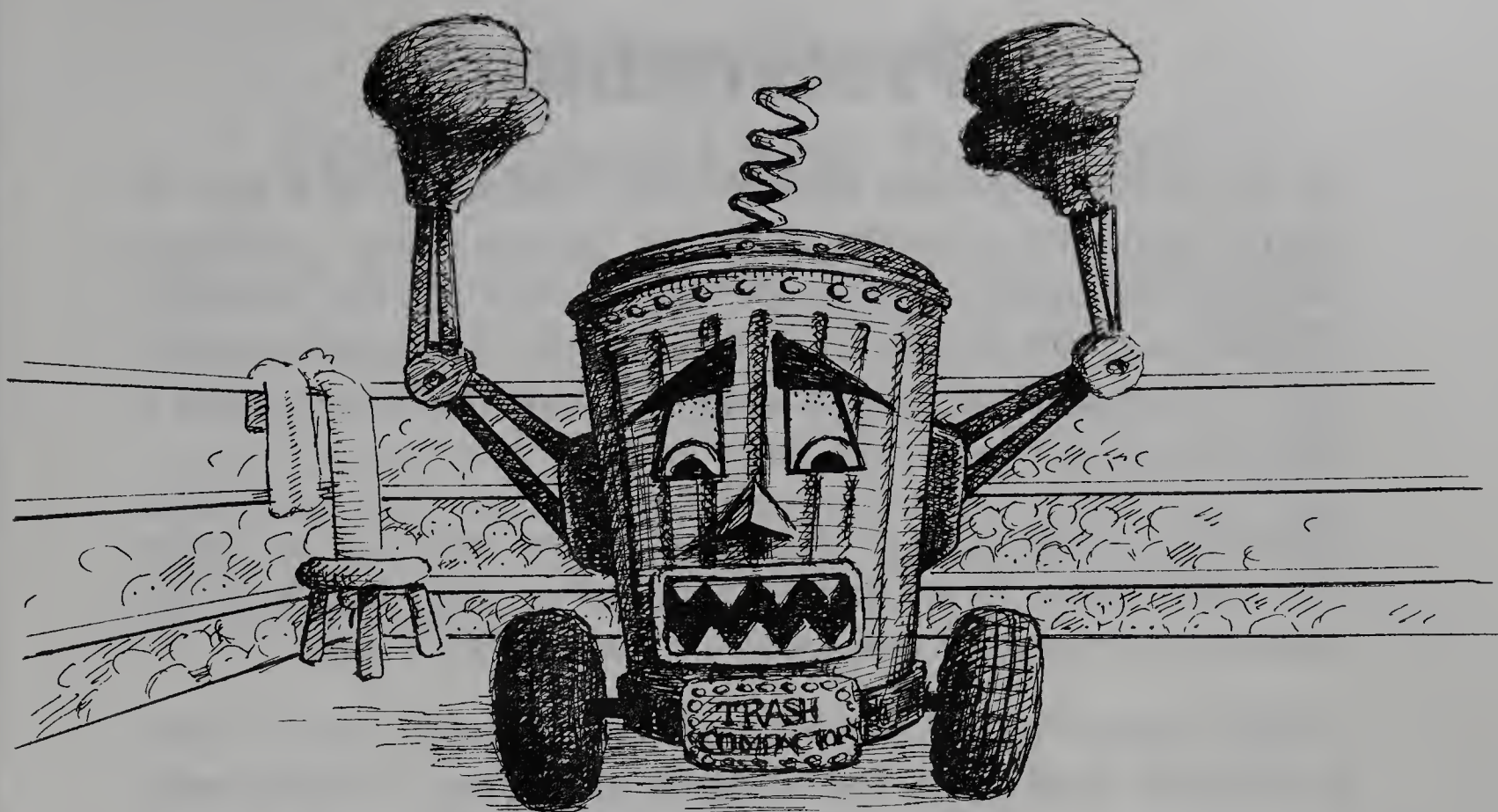
Unfortunately, for most children, the preexisting knowledge base in poetry consists solely of Mother Goose and similar silly sing-songy rhymes. This, in turn, makes it somewhat difficult to redirect the thinking of poetic expression in a child who is well-conditioned in these established rhyme and meter patterns. This is not to say that these forms don't play a valid role in child development, but just as a child's dinner menu should reflect some nutritional variety, so too should his literary menu.

The analogy of the trash compactor works well in giving new poetic direction. It is also quite an accurate simplified analogy.

A trash compactor merely alters the form of the collected rubbish. It condenses the volume but in no way alters or eliminates the contents.



Poetry has the same action on prose. It greatly condenses the volume, but it in no way alters or eliminates the intended meaning. Thought and mood that might take five pages to develop and illuminate might effectively be communicated in a poem of five lines.



And, just as the weight of compacted trash is intensified into a smaller area, so too is the power and impact of poetry intensified into a significantly smaller area. This is one of the prime factors that gives poetry the intellectual and emotional “knockout punch” effect.

The “trash compactor” concept can be initiated and grasped at an early age. The younger grades will obviously require a physical demonstration of the concept, but by third grade mere verbalization should suffice. By establishing this understanding, you have created a foundation that poetic masterpieces can be erected upon, and I guarantee you won’t believe the powerful poetry that your students will generate.

We teachers are but guides along the pathway to creativity, but it pays to have a flashlight along the way.

Prewriting

All of the poetry writing activities, or “Poetivities” as I refer to them, begin with prewriting activities. Simply stated, prewriting provides the direction, focus and springboard for the successful completion of any writing task. It is not only a prudent approach, but it is actually essential if writing energy and productivity is to be achieved.

Prewriting is analogous to a baseball pitcher warming up before the actual game, to an engine idling before being run on a cold winter day, to an actor rehearsing a scene before it's shot.

A blank piece of paper and a vague general writing task is quite an obstacle, even for a fluid, experienced writer. A writer must know where he's going, how to get there, and how to get the ballpoint rolling, so to speak. Parameters need to be established, and strategies need to be devised. Writing is at best a difficult task; it embraces any assistance it can receive.

This is the area where teaching skills are best utilized. The teacher in prewriting sets the purpose, guides the process, and motivates the outcome. Successful prewriting practically guarantees successful final writing.



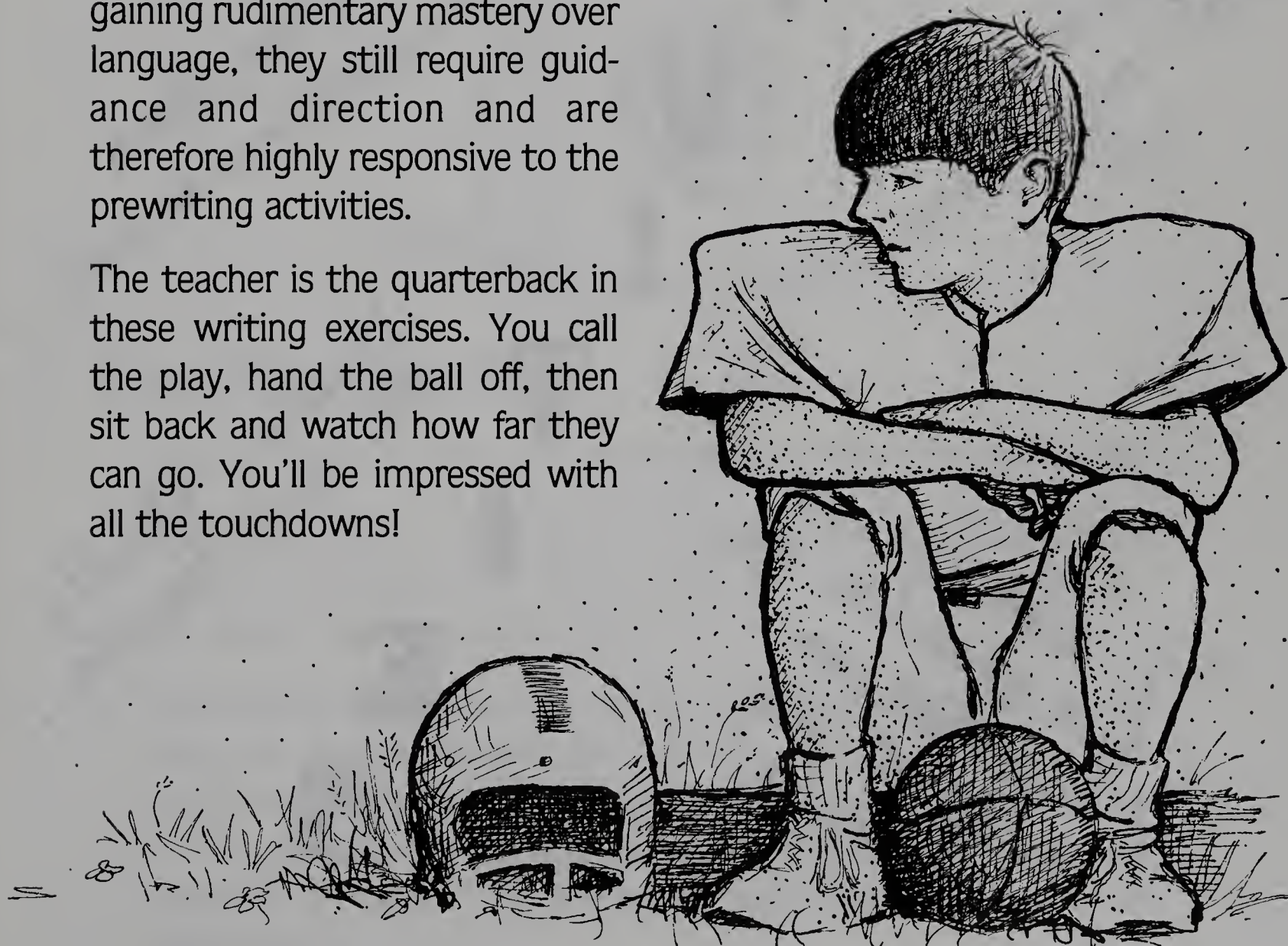
The prewriting steps within the “Poetivities” are really nothing more than calculated compasses, generators, and catalysts. They create a positive atmosphere of unity while simultaneously insuring the grasping of the intended concept or task and its subsequent completion. No one hits a bull's-eye without first taking aim.

Writing Poetry: Intermediate Grades

Children in the intermediate grades can produce some incredible poetry. They are in the fullness of childhood, with unpolluted, youthful zeal and a wealth of childhood experiences tempered by the maturity and sophistication of adolescence on the horizon. They understand their feelings far better than most people give them credit for and can often channel this understanding into strong and sensitive poetry.

Although they are at this time gaining rudimentary mastery over language, they still require guidance and direction and are therefore highly responsive to the prewriting activities.

The teacher is the quarterback in these writing exercises. You call the play, hand the ball off, then sit back and watch how far they can go. You'll be impressed with all the touchdowns!



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"Yea, though I walk
through the valley of
the shadow of death...."

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree...."

"I think that I
shall never see...."

"I took the one
less traveled by,
And that has
made all the
difference."

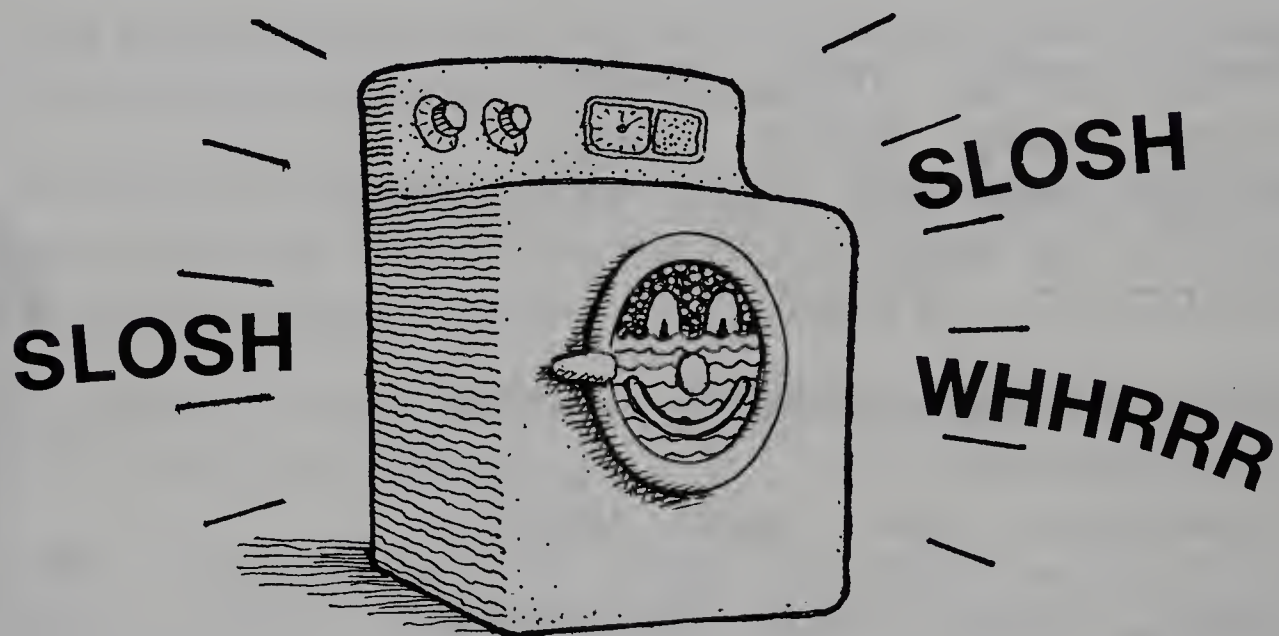
"Double, Double
Toil and Trouble...."

Mother Gooseonomatopoeia

Poetry Objective: Changing form/Reducing already established ideas to a smaller set of words that retain the intended meaning

Language Objective: Literary devices (onomatopoeia)

Reading Objective: Paraphrasing/Sequencing



Prewrite Activities

1. Discuss onomatopoeia and generate class lists of sound words.
2. Practice creating onomatopoeia words by having students write phonetic spellings for various sounds. (Example: a washing machine—"whhrrr...slosh...slosh...")
3. Sound Storytelling: Have as many sound-making devices in the room as possible. Divide the class into groups of four or five and give each group a different situation. The task of each group is to convey the idea of the situation through sounds only (physical or vocal). The viewing groups then guess what the situation is.

Mother Gooseonomatopoeia

1. Familiarize the class with the various Mother Goose rhymes that they probably well remember.
2. Put the following famous Mother Goose rhyme on the board in onomatopoeia form. Don't tell them the name; they should be able to guess it. Read it with *gusto*!

Thump. . . thump. . . thump. . . thump.
Thump. . . thump. . . thump. . . thump.
Puff puff. . . hah. . . hah. . . ahah. . . Whewwwwww!

Whirrrrrrrrrrr. . . SPLASH!

Errrrrr. . . thu-dunk. . . thu-dunk. . . thu-dunk. . .
Whewwwwwwww. . .
Creeeeeeeeak. . . splish. . . splish. . . Unhhhh. . .

Thump. . . thump. . . thump. . . WHOAAAAAA!
Ba. . . Bam. . . Ba. . . Bam. . . rumble-bumble. . .
crunch. . . crunch. . . Aaaaaaaa. . . SPLAT. . . SPLASH!

Thump. . . thump. . . thump. . . WHOAAAAAA!
Ba. . . Bam. . . Ba. . . Bam. . . rumble-bumble. . .
crunch. . . crunch. . . Aaaaaaaa. . . SPLAT!

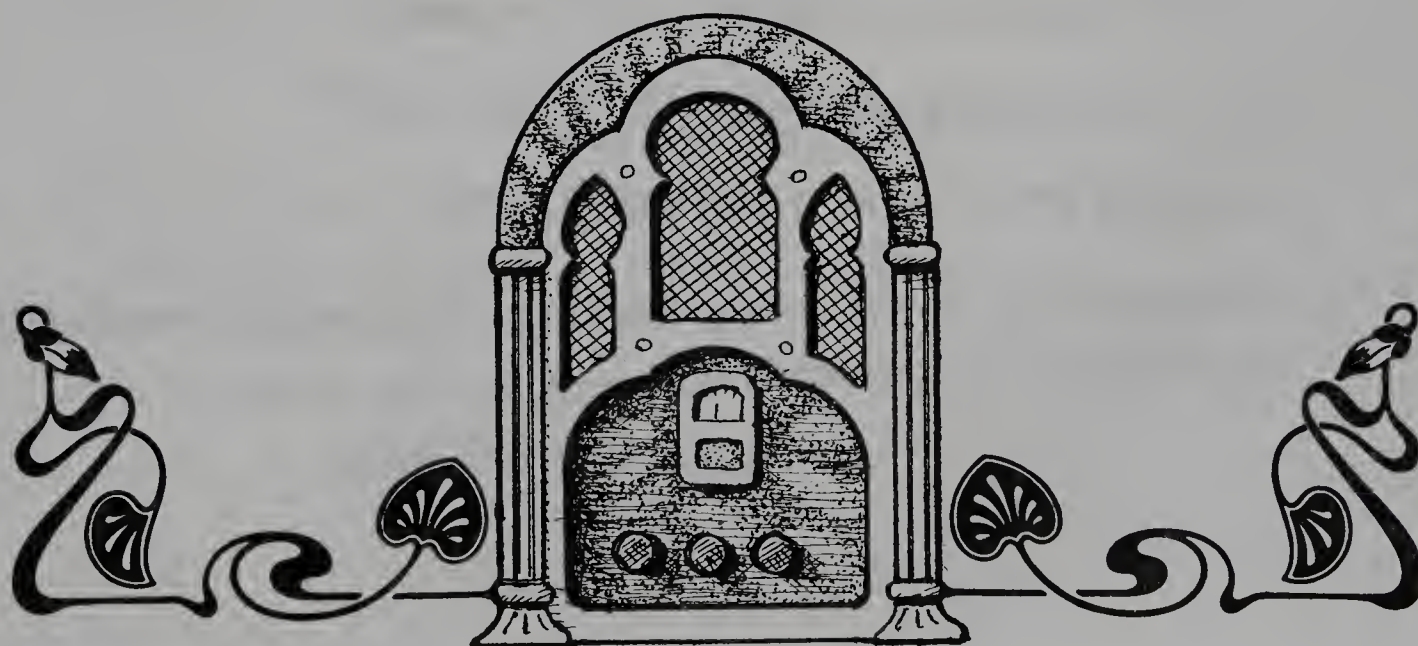


Read it aloud with dramatic intensity, and hopefully they will recognize it as "Jack and Jill."

3. Give children different Mother Goose rhymes and have them give the rhymes the onomatopoeia treatment.
4. Have children orally share afterwards as the class guesses the Mother Goose rhymes.

Expansion Ideas

1. Have students make taped stories using as much onomatopoeia and as many sound effects as possible.
2. Send them to the lower grades with their new versions of Mother Goose and have them share the onomatopoeia and act them out for the younger children.
3. Do games in which children combine pantomime with onomatopoeia to act out scenarios.
4. Listen to tapes of old radio shows, discussing the importance of sound effects to the story and their value as imagination “grabbers.”



The Old Squeeze Play

Poetry Objective:	To work with the compacting nature of poetry
Language and Reading Objective:	To recognize the key words or phrases that carry the meaning in extended reading/Main ideas/Sequencing

Prewrite Activities

1. Put the following clipped phrases on the board and, as a group, generate complete sentences that would communicate the same intended meaning:
 - a. HUNGRY, EAT—I'm hungry and would like to have something to eat now.
 - b. JUMP, SPLASH, SWIM—Let's jump into the pool and go swimming.
 - c. BIKE, CRASH, OW—I crashed my bike and hurt myself.
2. Now do the reverse of #1. Give the sentence and have them "clip" it.
 - a. The fireman put out the fire in the garage.
 - b. I'm very sleepy and would like to go to bed.
 - c. I had a lot of fun at my birthday party.
3. Take the class to the library/learning center and have each child check out a *primary* storybook.

The Old Squeeze Play

1. Students are to carefully read their primary books at least two times.
2. They are then to write a compacted version of the story in poetry form.
3. Be sure to stress that they are to retain the original meaning and action of the story and that they are not allowed to write any complete sentences.
4. Place poem versions within the books themselves and use some class time to have students exchange and share.

Expansion Ideas

1. Have students make compacted poem versions of their favorite movies.

Example: Star Wars

Vader chasing. . . .

Princess captured

R2 Death Star Secret—Droids escape

Luke finds Droids

and Ben (Jedi Knight)

Hire Han Solo and furry Chewbacca

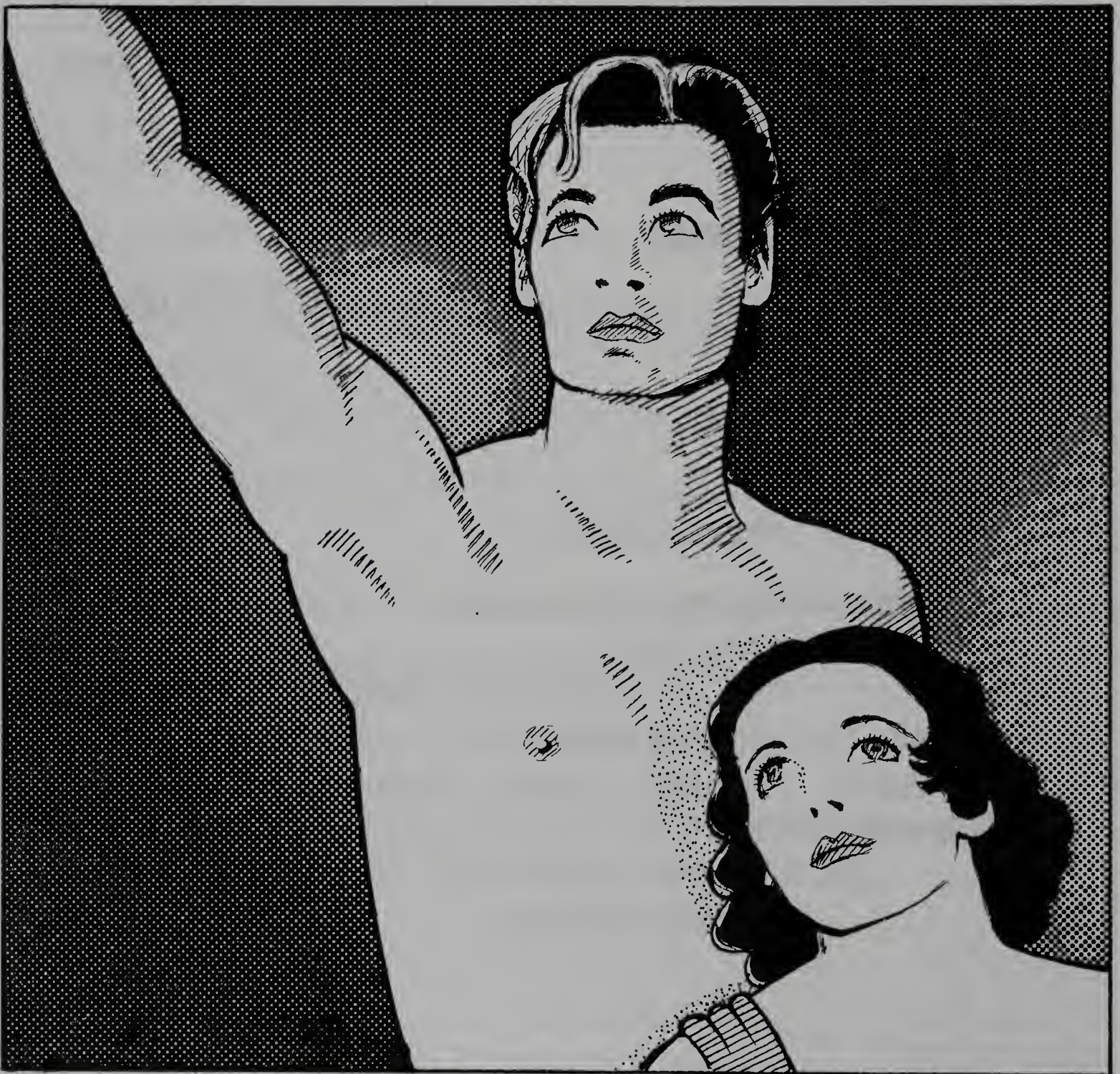
Pursued. . . captured. . . rescue. . . escape . . .

Flee to Rebel base

Luke trusts the Force—

Death Star destroyed!

2. Have a "Me Tarzan, You Jane" afternoon when all verbal communications have to be in clipped, compacted, nonsentence form. (This is a good time for the superintendent to come by and observe. You can watch him/her go gray right before your eyes.)
3. You can also utilize the "clipping" technique in developing comprehension and recognition of key plot elements in the current reading series.

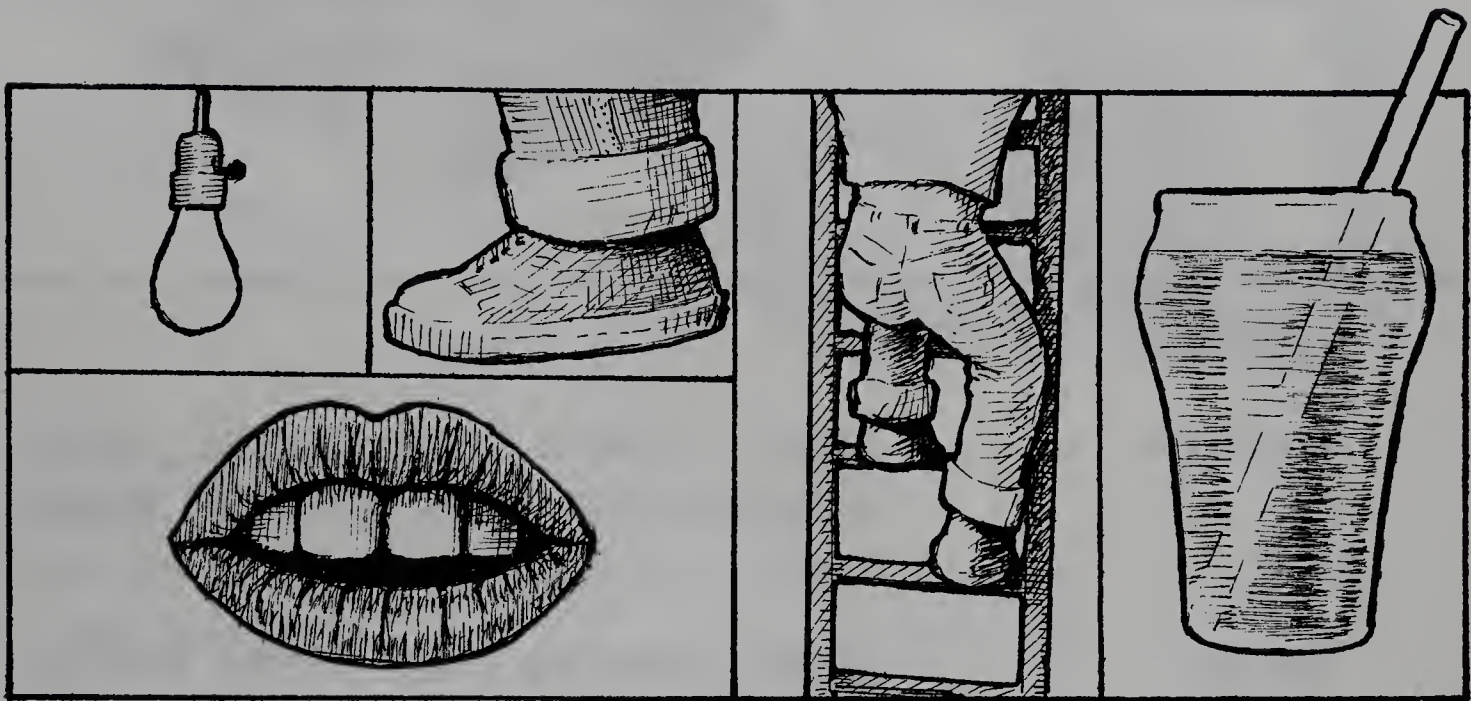


Turn on the Verb Power

Poetry Objective: Develop crispness in impact/Word choice

Language Objective: Verbs

Reading Objective: Spotting key words in comprehension/Verbs as the carriers of the *plot*



Prewrite Activities

1. Review and discuss action verbs.
2. As a class, generate a series of verbs that revolve around a school day. (Example: walk, open, take, hold, turn, look, speak, raise, read, write, eat, drink, run, play, study)
3. Explain that verbs are what tell you what happens in a story. Verbs are the key to understanding the plot actions in both fiction and real life.

4. Give your students the following occupations and have them list verbs under each one that specifically have to do with the occupation.

- a. Policeman
- b. Dentist
- c. Football player



Examples:

Policeman:	helps, protects, drives, checks, warns, tickets, arrests, saves, handcuffs, shoots
Dentist:	greet, examines, x-rays, cleans, teaches, fixes, fills, drills, pulls, numbs, charges
Football player:	exercises, lifts, practices, runs, blocks, tackles, throws, hits, kicks, catches, scores

5. After guiding the students through the examples, give them the opportunity to verb list some of their own ideas (teachers, parents, babies, etc.).
6. Distribute the following sheet, going over the example before turning them loose.

Elmo and Zelda walked into the dark cave. They were both trembling with fear and listening for strange noises. All of a sudden they bumped into a huge chest of thick, coarse fur. They screamed and sprinted out of the cave, leaped into the river below, and swam home to safety.

Here the short story is reduced to a series of verbs and put into some kind of poetic format.

Walked. . .

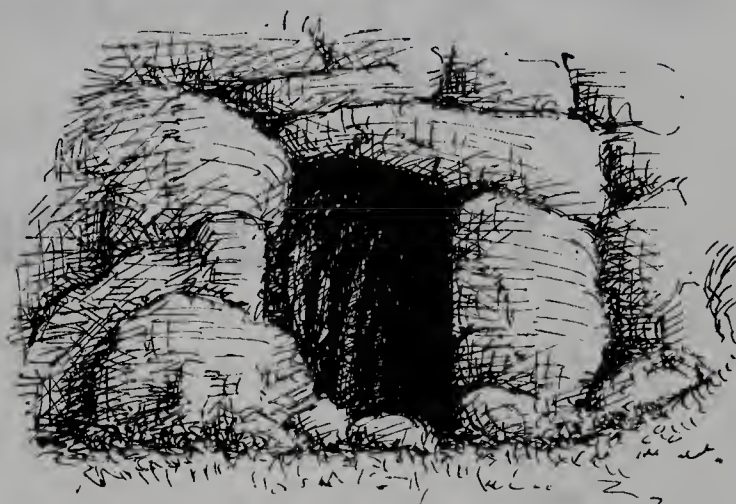
Trembling, listening

Bumped!

Screamed, sprinted,

Leaped,

Swam.



Carefully read the following short story and reduce it below into a "verb only poem."

Elmo and Zelda ran to the car pumped with excitement. They didn't even fight as their parents drove them to Amusement Wonderland. They knew that in a little while they'd be screaming on the roller coaster, gasping on the Ferris wheel, spinning on the tilt-o-whirl, smashing on the bumper cars, and gobbling cotton candy in between.



7. Share and discuss how the verb poetry still retains the action of the story but leaves the details up to the mind of the reader.

Turn on the Verb Power

1. Give each child a standard early fairy tale (“The Three Little Pigs,” “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” etc.).
2. The student is to reduce the story to a sequential series of action verbs put into whatever poetry format he chooses. He is *not* free to eliminate or change the action of the story. Stress that he is to zero in on the key verbs of the plot.
3. Share the completed “verb poems” with classmates, who should be able to identify the stories.

Expansion Ideas

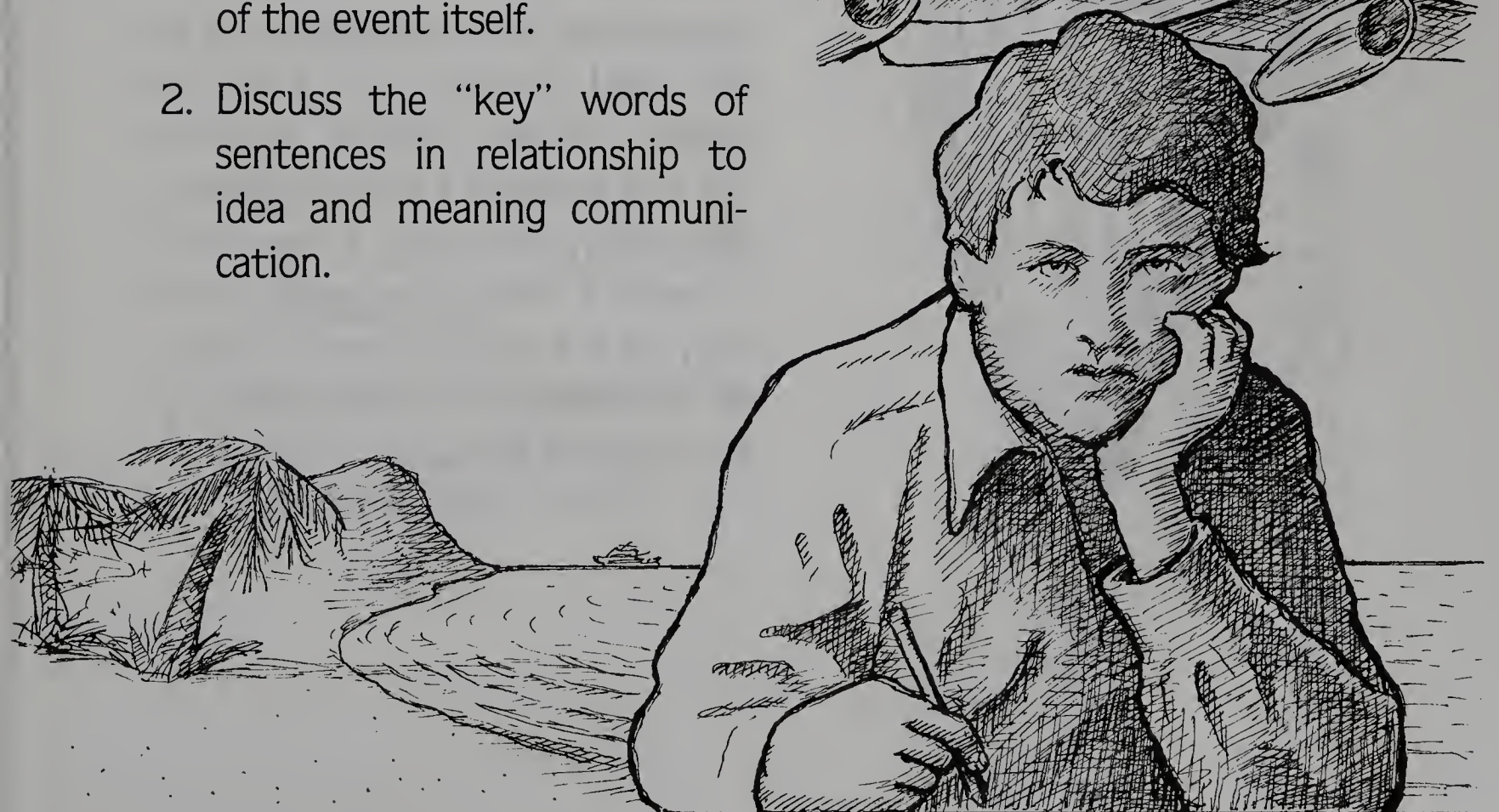
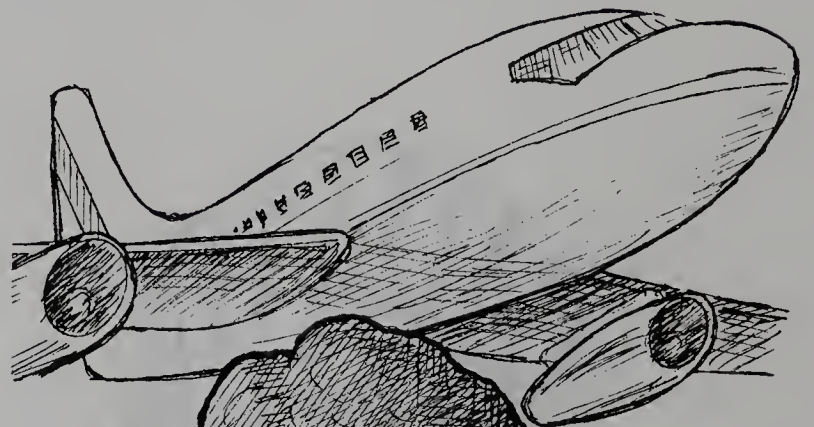
1. Create a Verb Mural to go around the room telling a story.
2. Use as a springboard for teaching adverbs.
3. Keep verb diaries for a week. (Students write the actions they’ve done in diary form.)

You to Two, Too

- Poetry Objective: To dramatically illustrate the “compacting” quality of poetry
- Language Objective: Sentence analysis/Key parts of speech
- Reading Objective: Distilling the critical meaning/Comprehension

Prewrite Activities

1. Have each student write a descriptive prose piece about an important event in his life. His main objectives are to first, tell where the event took place; and second, explain all aspects of the event itself.
2. Discuss the “key” words of sentences in relationship to idea and meaning communication.

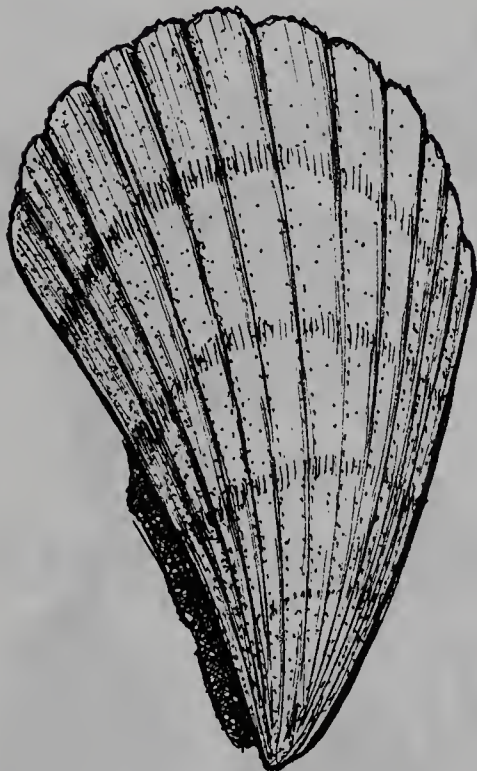


You to Two, Too

1. Have the students go back to their compositions from the prewrite and reduce them to poems.
2. They are to examine each sentence and can choose only *two* words from each sentence to create the poem. Really establish the importance of which two words they choose.

Short Example:

I was at a beautiful beach in Hawaii. My family had traveled to a small deserted cove. We were looking for seashells.



I kind of wandered off by myself and was walking along the ocean's edge. All of a sudden I spotted something that was glistening in the sand ahead of me. I ran up ahead and saw that it was the tip of a seashell. I started digging like crazy, and when I was done I couldn't believe my eyes. I had dug up a seashell about the size of a football. It's still on my bookcase at home.

Buried Treasure

Beautiful beach

Deserted cove

Looking seashells

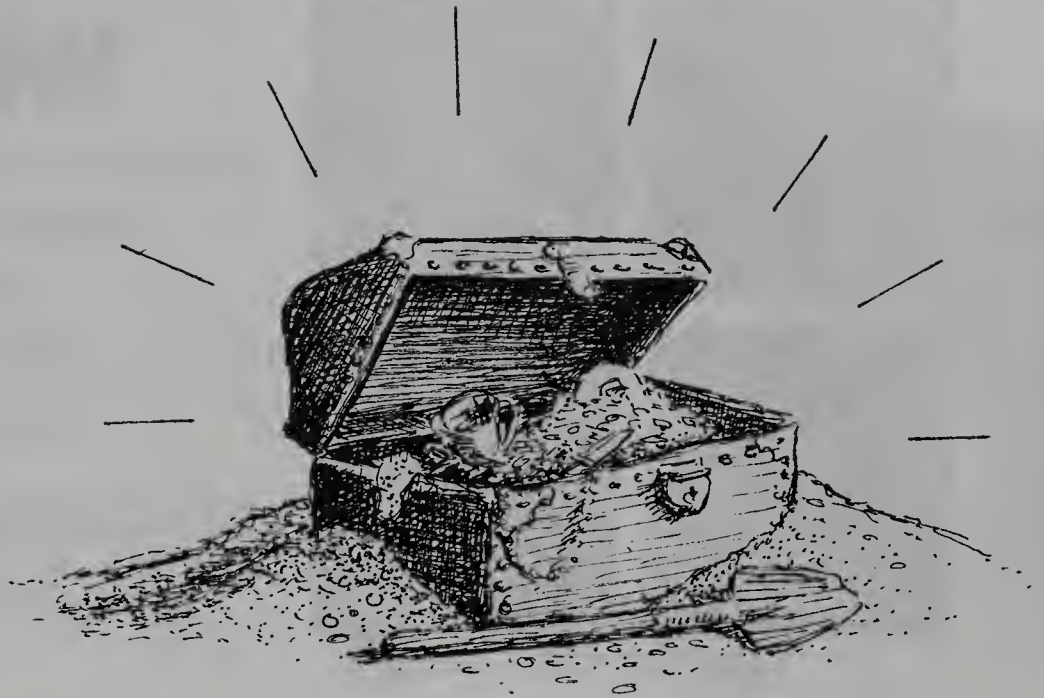
Wandered off

Spotted glistening

Digging crazy

Football size

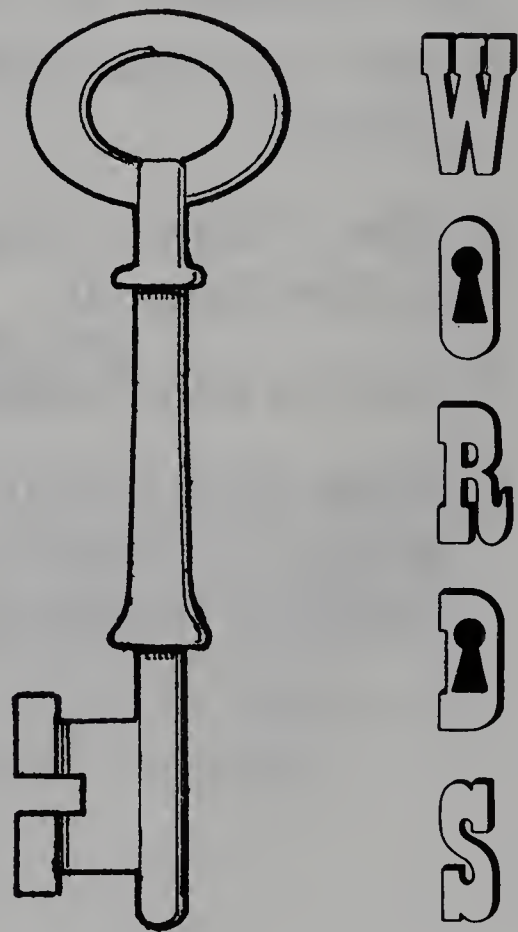
On bookcase.

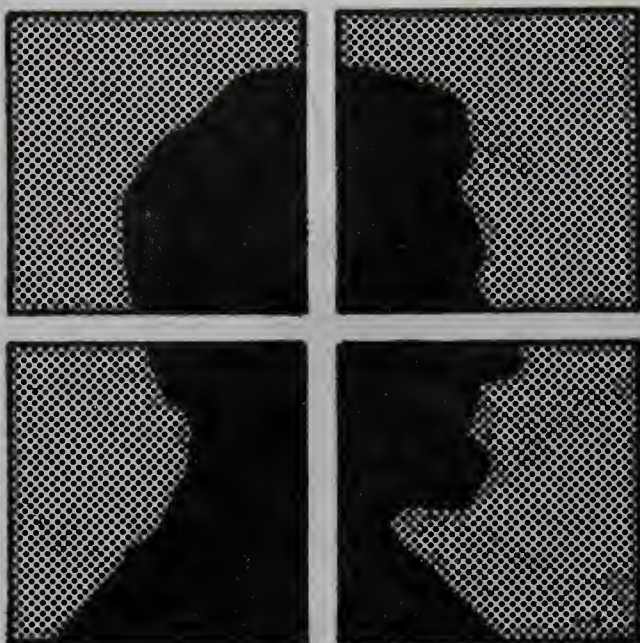


3. Have students share and determine what the story was about.

Expansion Ideas

1. Distribute the *two*-word poems to other students and have them write sentences that tell the story. Poets can then compare the versions with their own.
2. Apply the same technique in reading and discuss in your groups the “key” words.





Who Be Me?

Poetry Objective:

To develop a personal heart and mind portrayal of self with poetic impact.

Language and Reading Objective:
Character traits

Prewrite Activities

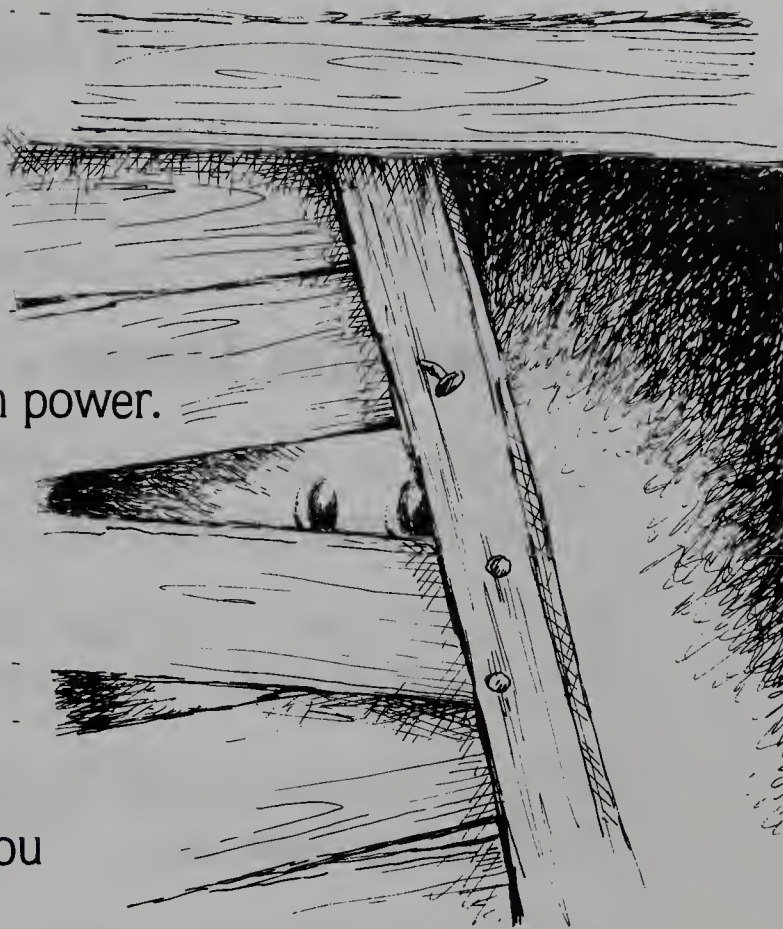
1. This Poetivity works well upon completing a unit on biography/ autobiography.
2. Take a character that the entire class is familiar with (real or created).
3. Make a listing of this character's personality traits, things he/ she likes doing, etc.
4. Turn the gathered information into a poem.
5. As you create this group piece, concentrate on word choice and attempt to eliminate the subtle or little known aspects of the character's personality.

Example: E.T.

Loveable alien from a faraway world,
Your magic heart care
teaches us,
reaches us with power.

Playful buddy,
Your big eyes see us for what we are.

As your finger love grows plants,
it grows us as well,
And when you go home
our thoughts will follow you
beyond the stars.



6. Discuss how it is difficult to write about what another person thinks or feels, how no one ever really can know us as well as we know ourselves.

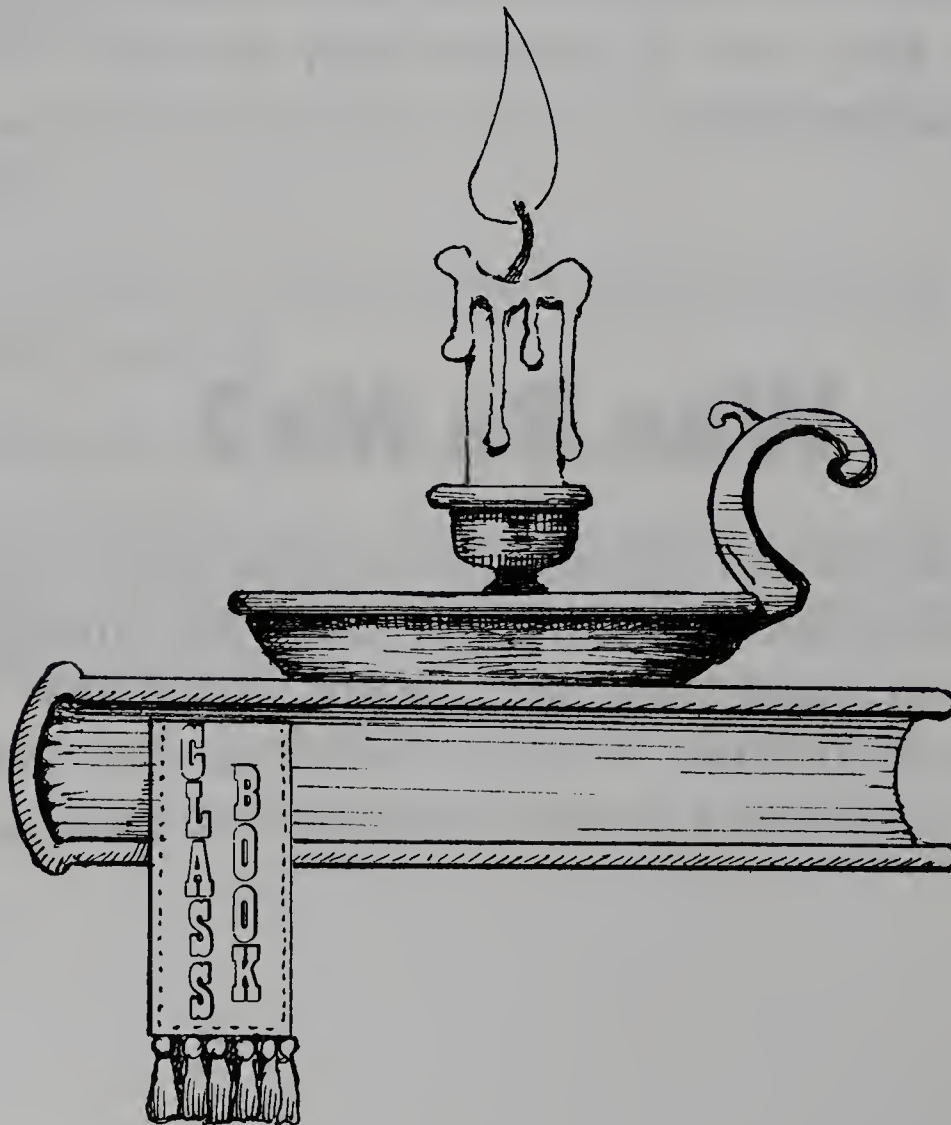
Who Be Me?

1. Give the class fifteen minutes in which students are to jot down notes about themselves. It must be total quiet. Emphasize that they should concentrate on a serious examination of their individual personalities. Minimize the “things that they like to do” aspect, which will probably dominate their thinking.

2. Students are then to use the notes to write a “Me” poem.
3. Emphasize word choice again and let them know they are free to format as they choose.

Expansion Ideas

1. Create a class book with the “Me” poems, biographical information, photos, etc. (Good for Open House.)
2. Use the poem technique as a component of future book reports or book projects.
3. Have students make family albums in which poems are one of the components.
4. Break the class into pairs and have them interview each other, turning their notes into mini biographies.



Face It

- Poetry Objective: Developing mood, sensitivity, insight
- Language Objective: Word choice and word control/Adjectives
- Reading Objective: Inferencing/Cause-Effect/Drawing conclusions

Prewrite Activities

1. Discuss body language, emphasizing facial expressions.
2. Have students take turns demonstrating various facial expressions that specifically tie in to some emotional response (excitement, sorrow, anger, etc.).
3. Repeat #2, only this time the students must verbally give some reason behind the feeling. (Example: Anger—My bike just got a flat tire three miles from home.)
4. Repeat #3, only this time the students aren't allowed to use any facial expressions. They must convey the emotion with body only.



Face It

1. Have available for the class large photographs of different faces. Magazine cutouts will suffice, but 8" x 10" black and white photos work best.
2. Students are to write poems for the face that they get, following this prearranged criteria:



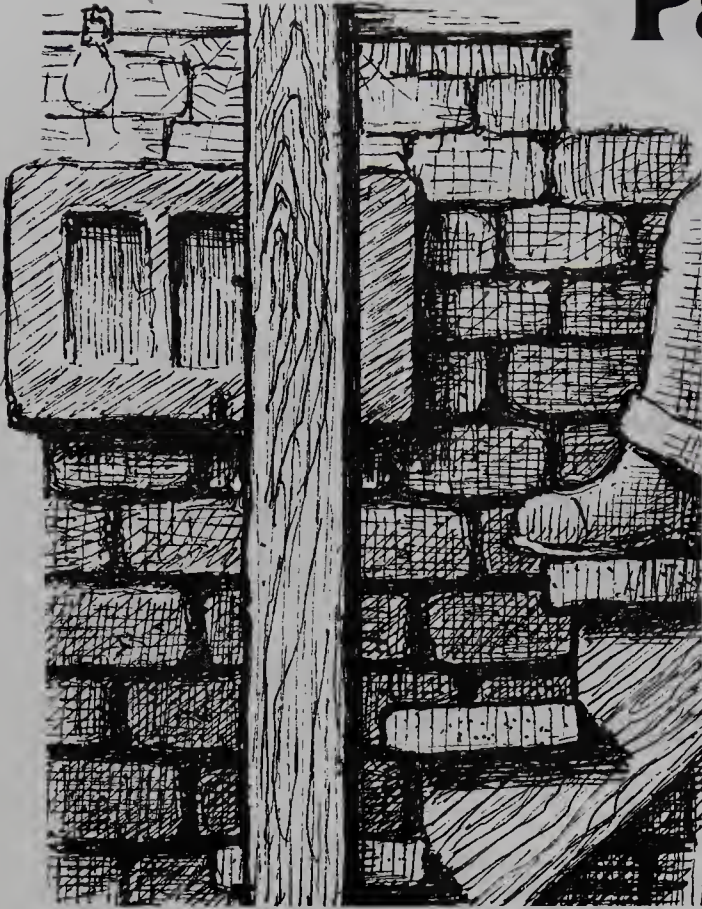
- a. No rhyming
 - b. Broken phrases of no more than five words per line
 - c. Poems to accomplish the following:
 - Contain appropriate mood
 - Contain varied and well-chosen adjectives
 - Hint at the reason the face is showing this particular look
3. Pin or tape the photos up in the room.
 4. Give each student someone else's poem, and he is to tape it under the face he believes it fits.
 5. Share poems and straighten out the poems with the photos.

Expansion Ideas

1. Have students bring in photos of family members and do similar style poems.
2. Have “Let Me Hear Your Body Talk” day in which students have to communicate with body language and facial expressions.
3. Have students take their poems/photos and develop biographical sketches for the faces, supplying all the pertinent information.
4. Create names and character traits for some of the more interesting faces and write a class story using these characters.



Paradise



Poetry Objective:

To create a sensory experience
with economy of words/Mood
and texture

Language Objective:

Selective use of adjectives,
nouns, and verbs

Reading Objective:

Setting/Selective details

Prewrite Activities

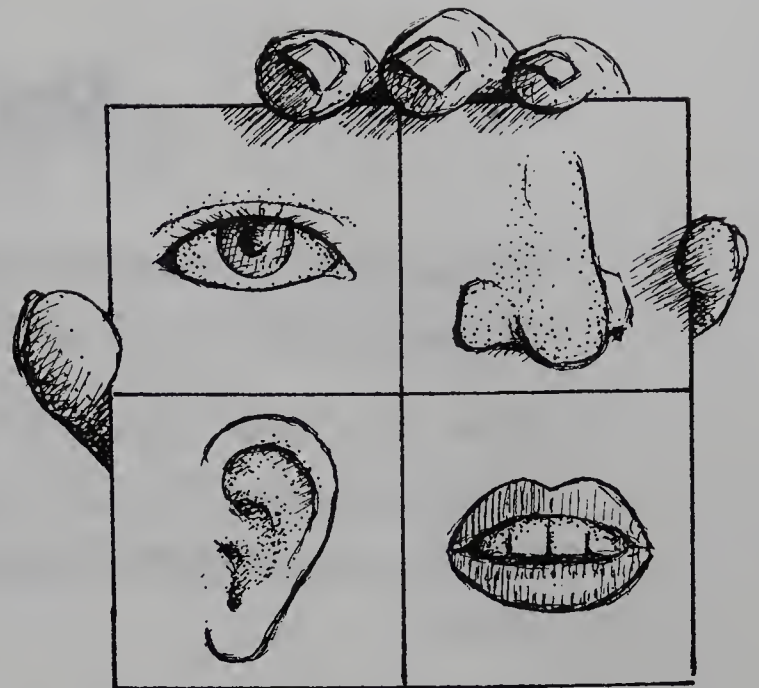
1. Discuss how the combination of nouns and adjectives allows a reader to visualize a place fairly accurately.
2. Put the following sentences on the board. Read them together and ask the class which one makes them see the basement better.

He walked down the stairs into the basement.

He walked down the creaky stairs into the damp, musty basement as the sun trickled through the cracked glass of the tiny window, illuminating the thick cobwebs spread across the rotting wood.

3. Turn the second sentence into a “trash compacted” line of poetry.

Creaky stairs,
Damp, musty air,
Slivered light shadows
Reflecting sticky webs of
death.



Talk about how the short poem amplifies the eeriness and thus creates mood, how the poetry format allows the reader to experience the basement.

4. Discuss how the senses are utilized in the poem. Sound: creaking. . . Smell: musty. . . Sight: shadows . . . Touch: sticky

Emphasize how it is through our senses that we process all information and how writers, particularly poets, must stimulate the senses of their readers.

5. Point out to the class that the poem is mainly a collection of adjectives and nouns.



Paradise

1. Instruct the students that they are to try to imagine their version of the “perfect place” and refer to it as “Paradise.”
2. Their first task will be to write two to three paragraphs that completely describe their paradises. Emphasize the importance of the noun/adjective relationships and the need to “feed the senses.”
3. After they write their descriptive pieces, they are to “trash compact” them into poetry form. Emphasize the aspect of mood and that they are to assist the reader in experiencing this created setting.
4. Share “Paradise.”

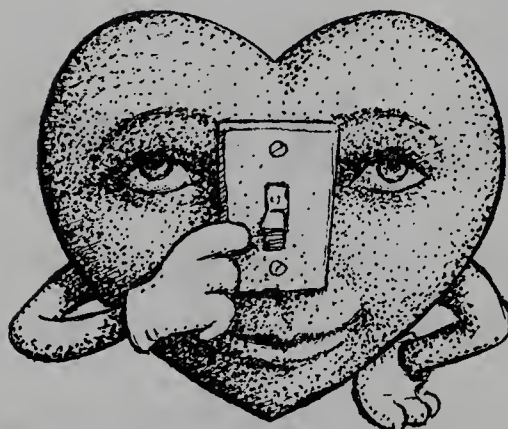
Expansion Ideas

1. Have students draw pictures and make collages of their paradises.
2. Tie in to social studies by creating accurate maps of their paradises and writing statistical and historical mini reports.
3. Have a Paradise Day, a time during which students dress like people from their created settings and bring food that they eat in their paradises.

Magic Love

Poetry Objective: To deal with one of the fundamental aspects of poetry—emotion: showing its understanding and also sharing its feeling

Language and
Reading Objective: Figurative language/Similies and metaphors



Prewrite Activities

This Poetivity ties in well around Valentine's Day.

1. Write in big letters on the board *love*, and have a big class discussion about love. (What is love? How do you know you love somebody? How do you know somebody loves you? How does love make you feel inside?)
2. Using other emotional responses, either teach or review figurative language, particularly similies and metaphors.

Examples:

Anger is like a tired, hungry grizzly bear.

Joy is a hundred brightly colored balloons rising in a sunlit summer sky.

Sadness is like a leafless tree standing all alone in the gray winter wind.

Excitement is a fireworks show over a crowded amusement park.

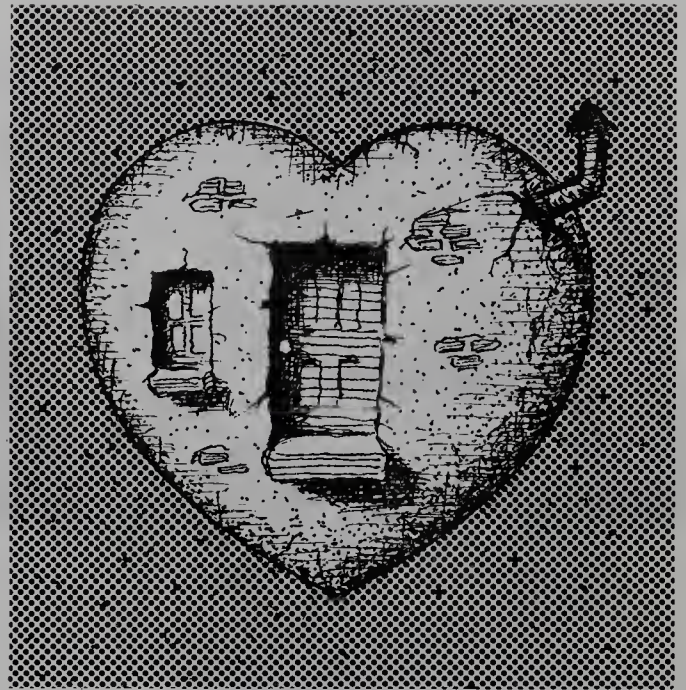
Magic Love

1. Arrange to have some “love” songs and/or gentle mood music to play for the class. Dim or reduce the lighting if possible.
2. Give the class five minutes to quickly jot down words and phrases that come to their minds from the word catalyst *love*.
3. The students’ task will then be to write poems entitled “Magic Love,” utilizing their love notes and emphasizing the necessity to generously utilize the figurative language skills covered in the prewrite.

***** (Depending on your class, it may become necessary to give more of a focused direction to this abstract subject matter. If that is the case, give them the following subtopics from which to choose: “Love of Family”. . . “Love of Nature”. . . “Love of Pets.”)

Expansion Ideas

1. Use the groundwork already completed for making *love cards* with poems for Mom and Dad. (This makes for excellent public relations.)
2. Create a Love Is All Around bulletin board.
3. Have the students make *love contracts* which they have one week to fulfill.



Example:

I Will Love

I, _____, will show love to my sister by letting her play with my toys.

I, _____, will show love to my mom by complimenting her on dinner and helping her with chores without being asked.

I, _____, will show love to my friends by not arguing at recess games or pushing in line.



Changes



Poetry Objective:
Power/Message

Language Objective:
Specific purpose communication

Reading Objective:
Understanding and duplicating
the style of newspaper editorials

Prewrite Activities

This Poetivity integrates well with a unit on the newspaper, a unit on current affairs, and a unit on the futuristic projections for the twenty-first century.

1. Discuss various issues that affect people.
2. Have newspapers available and do a short lesson on editorials.
3. Have the students write editorials.

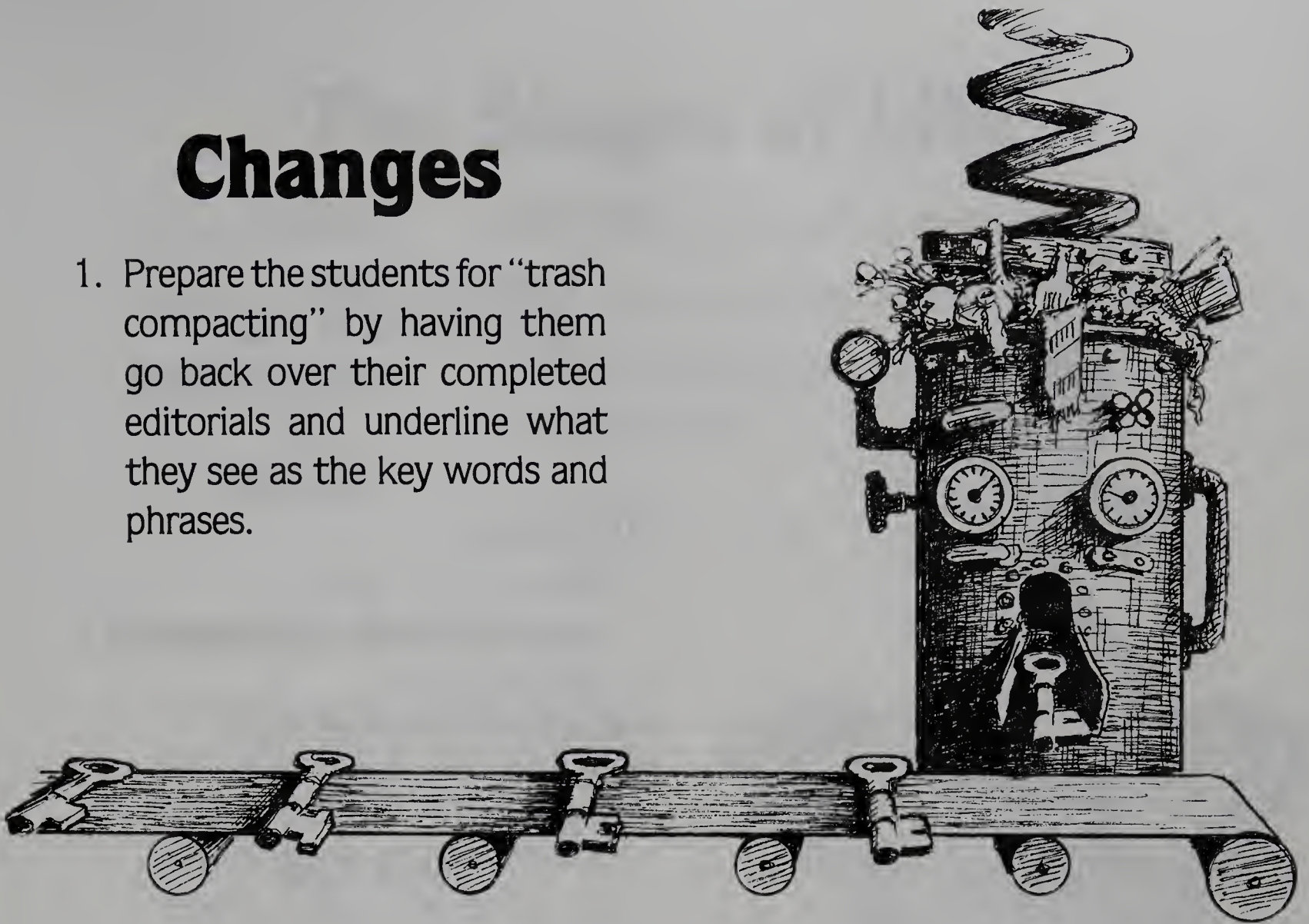
One complete paragraph.

First sentence clearly states opinion.

Next three to five sentences give specific detail support.

Changes

1. Prepare the students for “trash compacting” by having them go back over their completed editorials and underline what they see as the key words and phrases.



Example:

I think that all schools should have gym class every day. Children need a lot of exercise. Physical fitness is most important, but also, it is vital to the mind to exercise and get the blood pumping. It is also necessary for children to have a daily break from the routine grind of sitting at a desk doing work all day. They need an outlet to just blow off some steam and just have fun.

2. Students are to take their underlined words and put them into a free form poetry format. Emphasize that additions/deletions can be made. Stress the fact that they are trying to add *power* to the feeling and conviction of their original editorial.



Example:

Schools —

Need Gym Daily!
Need exercise to have
Physical Fitness
and
Vital Mind

Pump Blood
Break routine grind
sit and work, sit and work,
sit and work
Blaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!
Blow off some steam
and

HAVE FUN!

Expansion Ideas

1. Use the compacting exercise to condense preexisting editorials and/or front page news stories.
2. Have students make large number cards, and switch off groups to do “Olympic scoring” in which children rate the *power* between the original editorials and the compacted poems.

The Stages of Life

- Poetry Objective: Capturing mood/Specific aspects
- Language Objective: Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
- Reading Objective: Selective vocabulary/Comprehension compare and contrast

Prewrite Activities

1. Correlate with science curriculum of insect study, or, if not part of current curriculum, do a mini lesson on metamorphic insects using caterpillar/butterfly as the example. Discuss the “cycle of life” and put the four stages of a metamorphic insect’s life on the board.
2. Under each stage of life, list the specific details that pertain.
3. Have the students divide a sheet of notebook paper in half. On one half they are to write the word *Puppy* and on the other half write the words *Adult Dog*. Give the students about three to five minutes to list as many specific features as possible for each stage of a dog’s life.



4. Share their input as you make a group listing on the board. Use this experience to reinforce the concepts of similar features and differences (compare/contrast).
5. Develop further by bringing in the aspect of parts of speech, particularly nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Example:

Puppy: cute/adorable, tiny, untrained (adjectives)

Adult: handsome/beautiful, big, trained (adjectives)

Puppy: chews/wets/nips/jumps (verbs)

Adult: licks (verb); obedient (adjective)

Puppy: runs wildly (verb-adverb)

Adult: runs purposefully (verb-adverb)

6. Lead a discussion about the various stages in a human being's life, guiding students into the following specific breakdown:

Infant (birth to walking)

Toddler (two to four)

Child (five to twelve)

Adolescent (thirteen to twenty)

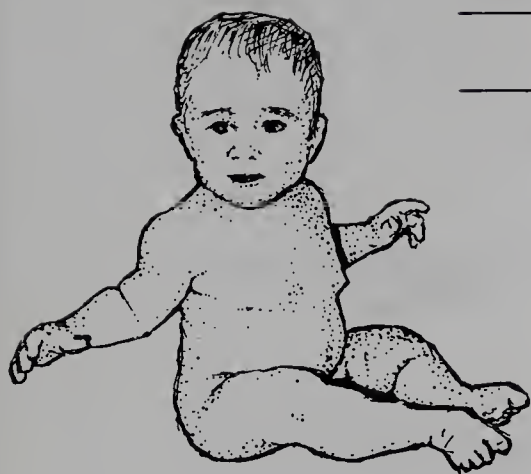
Young Adult (twenty-one to thirty-nine)

Middle Age (forty to sixty-five)

Elderly (sixty-five to . . .)

7. Distribute the following Stage sheet, and help the students get it going.

Specific Actions



Specific Problems

Specific Descriptions

Specific Actions

Specific Problems

Specific Descriptions



Specific Actions



Specific Problems

Specific Descriptions

The Stages of Life

Stage: _____

(Adjective)

(Noun)

(Verb)

(Adverb)

(Verb)

(Adjective)

(Adjective)

(Noun)

(Verb)

(Verb)

(Adverb)

(Adjective)

Stage: _____

(Adjective)

(Noun)

(Verb)

(Adverb)

(Verb)

(Adjective)

(Adjective)

(Noun)

(Verb)

(Verb)

(Adverb)

(Adjective)

The Stages of Life (Possible Outcome)

Stage: Infant

Dirty
(Adjective)

Diaper
(Noun)

Kicking
(Verb)

Wildly
(Adverb)

Crying
(Verb)

Wet
(Adjective)

Rubbery
(Adjective)

Pacifier
(Noun)

Sucking
(Verb)

Sleeping
(Verb)

Peacefully
(Adverb)

Cute
(Adjective)

Stage: Toddler

Busy
(Adjective)

Discoverer
(Noun)

Walking
(Verb)

Wobbly
(Adverb)

Running
(Verb)

Dirty
(Adjective)

Grabby
(Adjective)

Hands
(Noun)

Talking
(Verb)

Learning
(Verb)

Quickly
(Adverb)

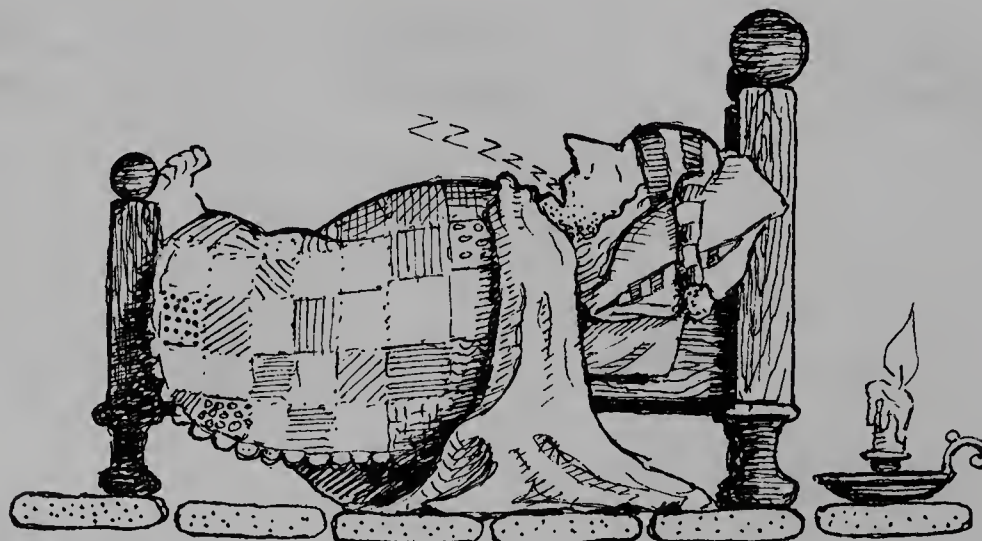
Active
(Adjective)

The Stages of Life

1. Share the results of the Stage sheet. This will provide the springboard into the poem.
2. Students are to select pertinent specific parts of their work sheets to embellish on their poem sheets.
3. Distribute The Stages of Life poem sheet as well as a dictionary or thesaurus to aid the children in their compositions. (Each child will need three sheets.)
4. As always, orally share the final products.

Expansion Ideas

1. Develop further understanding of the stage extremes by arranging to have your class spend some time in kindergarten classes, and arrange a field trip to a local nursing home.
2. Chart the various *learning* throughout the stages.
3. Have the students write future goals for each of the various stages awaiting them.
4. Read stories that revolve around one of the stages.



Row, Row, Row Your Boat Gently Down the Stream (of Consciousness)

Poetry Objective: Imagery/Mood

Language Objective: Descriptive word choice

Reading Objective: Understand and link the relationship between the subconscious with the conscious manipulations/Inferencing

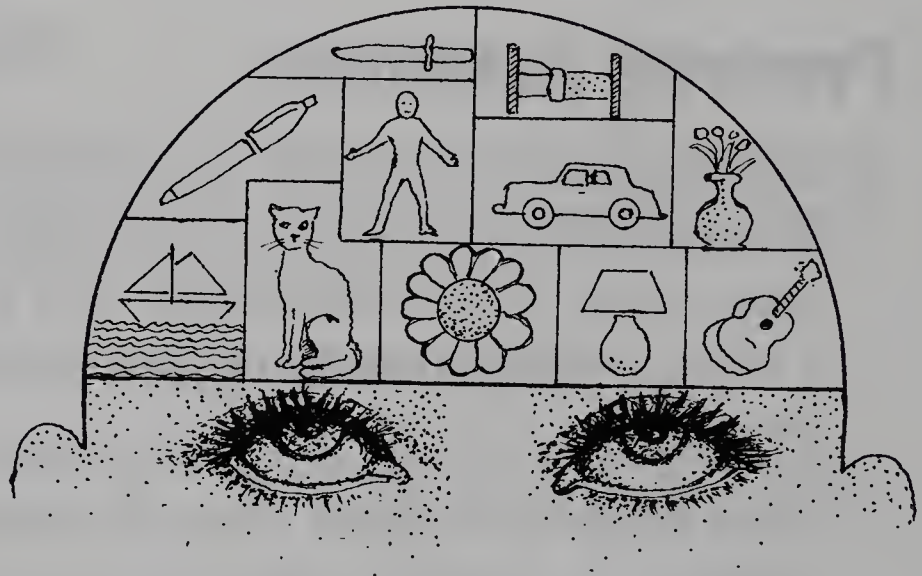
Prewrite Activities

1. Guide the students through an open-ended discussion of dreams, emphasizing the connection of the imagined images to a concrete reality (that is, the relationship of a particular nightmare to a recent viewing/reading of horror or the trauma of a real-life tragedy).
2. Allow students to share some of their own personal dreams, eliciting or yielding possible connections to a real-life phenomenon.



3. Discuss how words often are symbols that trigger individual images within the mind, stressing that these images vary from person to person, dependent upon their own distinct experiences and observations.
4. Do the following imagery-association exercise:
Instruct the students that they are to write down the first image that comes to mind from the given word symbol. Emphasize that they are to be as specific and descriptive as possible so that others can visualize their particular images. Start basic, perhaps orally, and build to more sophisticated symbols.

1. car
2. athlete
3. jungle
4. dinner
5. hero
6. happiness
7. love



5. Do selective sharing, pointing out the differences in image perception amongst these well-known semantic symbols due to the fusion with each child's individual likes and experiences.
6. Point out that all oral and written communication is constantly involved in expressing unstated concepts through imagery connection (inferencing).

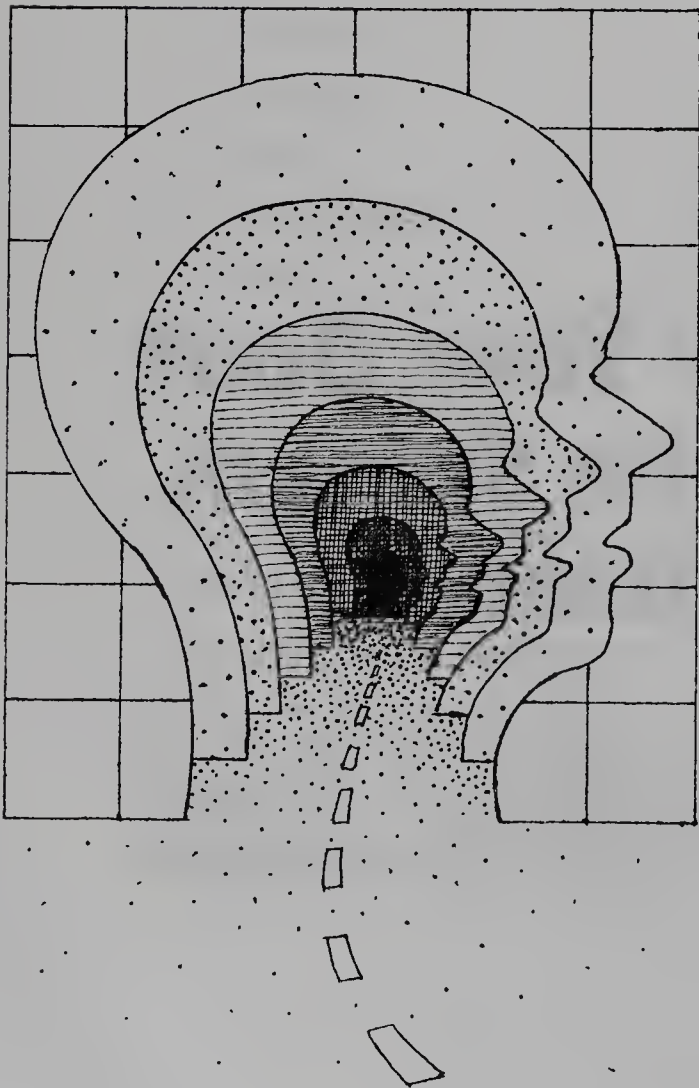
Examples:

1. The shutters banged with fury against the glistening aluminum siding as the limbs of the mighty oak tree thrashed with bent violence, helpless to the will of the dark, wet wind. (Here the conceptual symbol of *storm* is expressed without the actual mentioning of the word symbol.)
2. The little girl untied the velvet ribbon and removed the lid to a large, white cardboard box, immediately finding herself producing rapid high-pitched squeals as her arms surrounded thick, warm fur, an active and moist tongue, and a wagging tail pounding with the rhythm of a cranked-up metronome. (Here the imagery clearly expresses the concept of a girl receiving a present of a puppy, without the actual mentioning of the word symbol.)

Row, Row, Row Your Boat Gently Down the Stream (of Consciousness)

1. Write *Stream of Consciousness* on the board, and give a complete description of its meaning, being sure to emphasize that a stream constantly flows of its own nature, independent of the willful interference of man.

2. Turn off the room lights and tell the students they are to release the stream of their own thoughts and images. As each individual image pops, or rather flows, into their conscious minds, they are to quickly jot it down and immediately forget it, emptying their minds for the next image to float by. It will obviously be necessary for you to model your own “stream,” and to constantly reinforce the aspect of letting go once they have captured a single image. It also must be emphasized that there are no right or wrong responses, that the individual images can be wild or fantastic, and that their only responsibility is to be true to their stream. Obviously, since this prewrite is exceptionally abstract, it will be absolutely necessary for you to model quite extensively.



3. After three to five minutes of this stream drifting, the students are given the task of assembling their collected disconnected images into a poetic format under the title “Waking Dream.” Again, show the students a visual model, once again emphasizing the constant “grabbing hold” and “letting go” of the visual images. It will also most likely be necessary to go through a warm-up round before they catch on and feel relaxed and comfortable with the process.

Waking Dream

Palm trees swaying in the breeze

Supersonic jets playing tic-tac-toe
with their jet wash

Yellowstone grizzlies giving gentle bear hugs

Huge fountains spraying rainbow colors

Giant butterflies giving rides through the treetops

Skiing on crystal clear water while
being pulled by dolphins

Waving good night to the sun

setting slowly behind majestic mountains.

4. Upon completion, it is imperative that the poems be shared with a commentary and discussion of the particular mood or feeling that each poem will invariably inferentially communicate. The above poem, for example, maintains a common thread of nature and expresses a happy, free mood. This wakeful dreamer is probably not thrilled with being inside a classroom on a nice day.

Expansion Ideas

1. Repeat the basic design of the lesson with the addition of background music, making the connection of visual images with auditory sensory stimuli.
2. Keep dream journals for a one to two-week period.
3. Have students write possible interpretations of one another's stream-dream poems.

Space: The Final Frontier

Poetry Objective: Analogy/Metaphor

Language Objective: Word choice/Descriptive writing

Reading Objective: Blending fantasy, reality

Prewrite Activities

This Poetivity integrates well with any unit study on space.

1. Show any of the many “mind blowing” films or filmstrips that deal with the *immensity* of the universe.
2. Do a mini math lesson on the calculated distances of a light-year:
Number of seconds in a day = 86,400
 $86,400 \times 365$ (days in year) = 31,536,000
 $31,536,000 \times 186,270$ (speed of light) = 5,874,210,720,000 miles
Work the actual calculations with them. The sheer enormity of the numbers will astound them.
3. Lead a controlled discussion as to their opinions on whether they believe life exists elsewhere in the universe.
4. Do a lesson on the nature of analogies, emphasizing the enigma of communication in that we are limited in relating the unknown, undiscovered in terms of the already known. Do a series of analogies with the class establishing the common ground.

Examples:

. . . a heart is like a pump. . . (similar working feature)

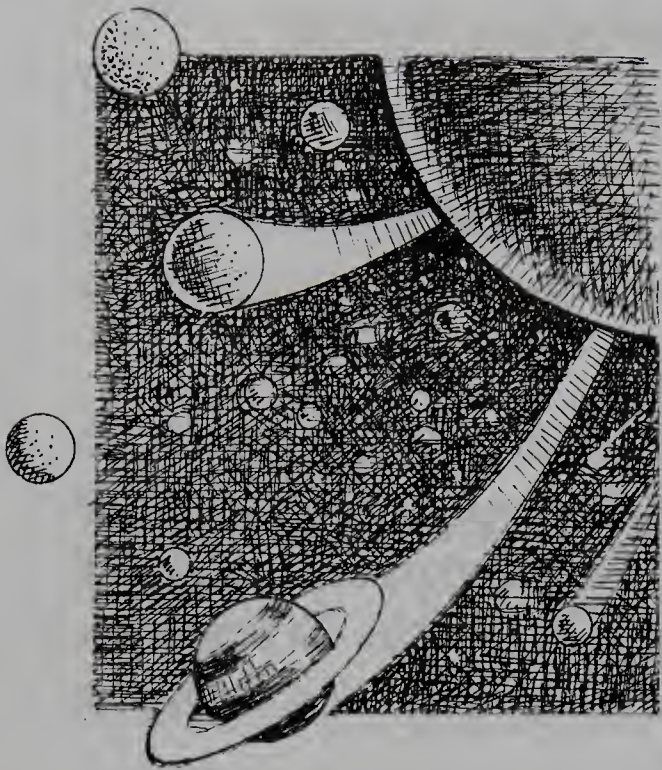
. . . black is to white, what night is to day. . (application of deductive logic)

. . . an angry word bruises someone's feelings like a missed hammer stroke bruises someone's heart. . (similarity in comparative results)

5. Give each student two "globbs" of clay or Play-Doh. With one of the globbs, he is to close his eyes and for a time of no longer than ten seconds, mold it into any nondesignated shape. At the end of his blind molding period, he is to write on notebook paper a thorough description of his indistinct blob, using as many analogous phrases as possible.
6. The student then puts his clay shape away and switches descriptions with another student. The task is then to try to duplicate (with the second glob of clay) his classmate's shape, based solely on the written description. Share results.
7. Divide the class into groups of three and give the following Spaceploration sheet. You may also want to make official NASA journals for their notes.



Spaceploration



The three of you form a NASA crew traveling in a space vehicle that is able to achieve light speed. You are trillions and trillions of miles from Earth exploring an uncharted galaxy. Each of you has a particular position and specific job to do as described below. Good luck, and try to stay away from black holes and asteroids. And, oh yes, may the Force be with you!

.....
POSITION: Captain

RESPONSIBILITIES: You are the pilot of the NASA ship. You are to name the ship, describe its physical design and operational systems, and enter in the Captain's log any unusual events experienced in the flight.

.....
POSITION: Scientist (Geology and Meterology)

RESPONSIBILITIES: You are to name the planet your crew discovers and write a journal entry completely describing the planet's physical features and weather systems.

.....
POSITION: Scientist (Biology and Anthropology)

RESPONSIBILITIES: You are to name any life-forms found on the planet and write a journal entry completely describing those life-forms as well as the social system in which they exist.

.....

Space: The Final Frontier

1. Give each student a handful of white drawing paper cut into 4" x 4" squares. These will serve as official NASA photographs of their discoveries, though they are actually drawn by the students.
2. Tell the class that Earth has evolved to a language system in which all communication is now in poetry form. Complete sentences are neither spoken nor written. The students' task will be to turn their journal notes into extended poems rich in adjectives and analogies.
3. Each crew then presents their finished poems and photographs to the class.

Expansion Ideas

1. Follow up the poem presentations with a simulated press conference.
2. Make a large scale drawing of the planets and creatures, turning your room into another galaxy with a full display of all their work (Open House?).
3. Develop a series of extraterrestrial customs and observe a select few within the classroom.



The Magical, Mystical, Mood Message Muse

Poetry Objective: Open-ended interpretation

Language Objective: Symbolism/Figurative language

Reading Objective: Inferencing/Main idea

Prewrite Activities

1. Do a lesson on *symbols*. Start with sign symbols such as the symbol/signs for No Smoking, No Swimming, No U-Turn, etc.
2. Arrange to present information (filmstrip, film, library materials) about the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and American Indian symbology.
3. Discuss color symbols and brainstorm what different colors signify in terms of emotions.

Examples:

Red. Anger, jealousy

Blue. Boy

White. Purity

Pink. Girl

Green. Envy

Yellow. Happiness

4. Distribute the following Object Symbols sheet, being sure to emphasize that there are *no wrong answers*. Whatever comes to mind is correct.

Object Symbols

A (picture of a tree) represents _____

A (picture of an eagle) represents _____

A (picture of a circle) represents _____

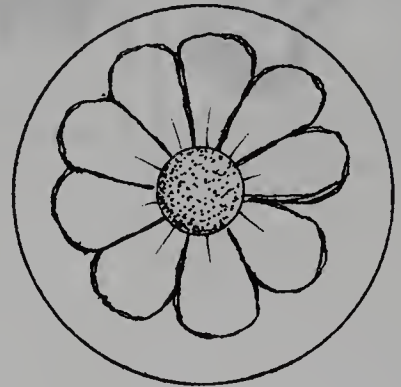
A (picture of a cat) represents _____

A (picture of a bridge) represents _____

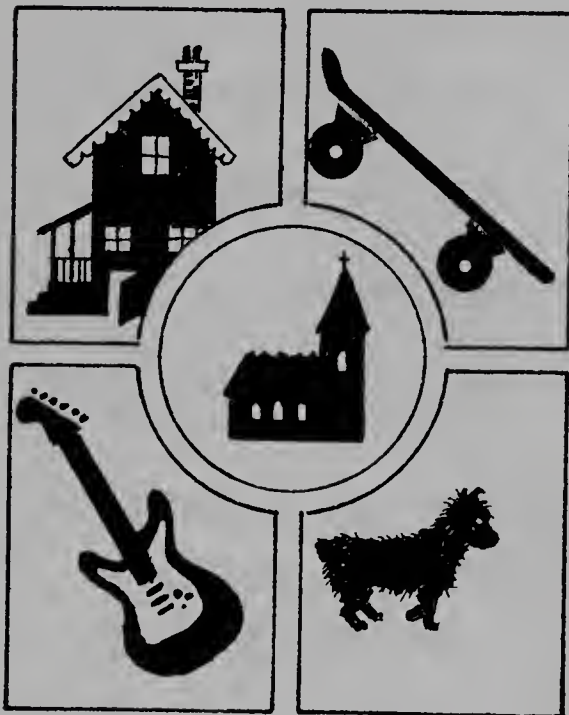
A (picture of a star) represents _____

A (picture of a flower) represents _____

A (picture of a skyscraper) represents _____



5. Openly share the similarities and differences in the students' responses, again emphasizing the validity of the different interpretations.
6. Give each student a strip of plain white paper and instruct each to develop five to ten *symbols* that best represent some facet of his life. There can't be any words.
7. Have the students tape their personal *symbols* to the front of their desks, and have the entire class rotate around the room writing down short interpretations of each student's symbol profile.
8. Have each student then briefly explain his own symbol profile as the rest of the class compares it with their interpretations.
9. Discuss how poetry, like all art forms, is open to a wide variety of interpretations and that it is intended to be open and multileveled.



10. Distribute the following Poetic Interpretations sheet, while again reinforcing there are *no* wrong answers. Whatever inferential message comes to the student is perfectly acceptable. Both of the short poems are highly abstract and will require you to read them aloud and explain some vocabulary.

Poetic Interpretations

Pegasus,

My Pony!

Where are you to fly me,

to all of the magical kingdoms I crave?

I try hard to take off,

But my feet don't go far.

I know if I only had wings I could leave.

See Thee

the reflection of my soul. . . .

Know

the hidden truth of "I"

Pass as we must

through the corridors of Time

Each word,

each smile,

defines our invisible touch.

11. Share the results of the students' interpretations, validating what they had to say. Lead a discussion on the symbols within the two poems:

Pegasus. . . magical kingdoms. . . wings. . . soul. . . corridors.
. . Time . . .

Discuss mood as a subtle yet distinct feelings response experienced privately by the reader.

The Magical, Mystical, Mood Message Muse

1. Explain to the class that their task will be for each to compose a poem that conveys an abstract message indirectly. They are to apply symbology and not mention the chosen message directly. Tell them the mood will arise naturally, that it is linked to the message.
2. Put the following abstract messages on the board for the students to choose for their poems:
 - the nobility of honor.
 - beauty that goes unrecognized.
 - the magic of giving.
 - the treasure of friendship.
 - the life-giving power of kindness.
 - YOUR OWN IDEA.
3. Share the poems as classmates comment on both the message and the mood.

Expansion Ideas

1. Coordinate a detailed study of modern art with your school's art teacher.
2. Have the students develop creative writing stories and artwork to accompany their abstract poems.
3. Create extended comics in the style of Roger Hargreaves' Little Miss and Mr. books, with the main character being Little Miss Poem or Mr. Poetry.
4. Share some poetry from established famous poems and discuss meaning and mood.
5. Have the class write more extended abstract poetry to accompany and amplify selected pieces of classical music.



For Consideration

Literary style is absorbed through exposure much in the same way that music and art appreciation are developed. One cannot minimize the strength of the oral tradition in seed-planting style variations as well as initiating a motivating interest and appreciation of any form of literature.

This is especially true in regard to poetry, as it is the one literary expression capable of generating such a vast variety of styles and formats. By reading poems to your class, you not only can fill short time gaps, but can open an awareness to thought and feeling that will reflect itself in each child's personal communications.

Again, the key is variety. Many teachers seem to restrict their poetry reading to Shel Silverstein. He is fantastic and entertaining, to be sure, but should definitely be augmented with other forms and intents. Children *do* have a strong capacity for dealing with serious and mood-provoking material; let's not underestimate their hearts, as we certainly can't afford to underestimate their minds.

Sprinkle your poetry reading wisely. In addition to Mr. Silverstein, share some Dickinson, some Poe, some Frost, some Whitman, even some Shakespeare. Even if the meaning is beyond their comprehension, and remember that poetry can be understood at many diverse levels, the richness and musicality of the language itself will seep in more than you could possibly realize.

Most importantly, *enjoy*. The role modeling power we wield within the classrooms is indeed awesome. If the students can observe your interest and love for poetic expression, they, too, will evolve to gain a healthy attitude toward it and reach a comfort zone in terms of their own poetry writing.

The beauty of spending time on poetry writing is that it is one hundred percent success oriented. A student simply cannot write a wrong poem. Unlike prose, with its grammatical restrictions of sentence formation and paragraphing, the freedom inherent in poetry allows even the weakest students the opportunity to feel the beauty of success, building pride and accomplishment.

A Child's Poem

Words dance on paper,
exuberance well-served.

Perfect light reflected,
magic is preserved.

Heart untainted painting,
freedom dreams come true.

Beauty once forgotten,
now unfolds to you.

James Wainwright

Teachers: An Honorable Call to Duty

Prioritized lives

Steadfast

Creating the proper foundation on which to build

children that shine

on the horizons of tomorrow

Capturing and amplifying

the intended love from above

so that each can embark

on the chosen path that winds with heaven's light

through the cold confusion of the ever growing night

Shared heart power to feed their lives

so that they may always be

Knowing

and growing

through the meticulous sowing

of teachers who heed the call

cherish the gift

and follow the truth

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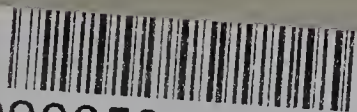
Intermediate

Poetivities combines poetry and involvement activities in ways that emphasize poetry writing as a skill which can be taught. This unique book is a guide to help children learn to express themselves in free verse. *Poetivities* contains easy-to-use lessons to guide young children in creative expression. Step-by-step instructions provide objectives, prewrite activities, topics, examples, expansion ideas and much more. Lead your students into developing an awareness of the flexible intents of poetry as well as an appreciation of poetry as a form of art. For intermediate grades 4-6.

About the Author

James Wainwright has been teaching 4th and 5th grade in the Naperville school system for 12 years. He has been an active participant in redefining language arts curricula and integrating writing throughout all educational disciplines.

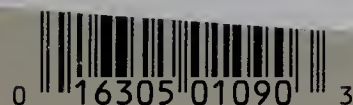
He holds a Bachelor's Degree in English from North Central College and a Master's Degree in Elementary Education from National College of Education.



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